

Mission Towards Muslims: A Middle Way

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Muslims as a large religious community second only to Christians and taking up around 1.3 billion of the world population, are always considered to be “Unreached People” that the Gospel should try to reach.

Mission towards them has been one of Christians’ prominent concerns throughout history. The contemporary Christian mission towards Muslims is either (i) a narrow evangelistic outreach or (ii) an interfaith dialogue that completely forfeits and gives up the goal of conversion. Although there is quite a spectrum of how the churches and Christian organizations carry out mission, they mainly belong to either one of these two approaches.

There were debates over these two approaches to mission. Some regard evangelistic outreach aimed at conversion as competitive and simple rivalry. It is also accused of lacking respect to the Islamic traditions and to be an excuse for Western colonization. On the other hand, some regard interfaith dialogue as merely a betrayal of God which gives up the supremacy and value of the Gospel and compromises to Islamic faith.

The present thesis aims at evaluate and integrate these two controversial missiological approaches in order to look for a more approachable middle way on Christians mission towards Muslims.

Firstly, a brief account of the historical and contemporary relationship between Islam and Christianity is overviewed. Secondly, a survey of different Christian mission approaches by two international Christian organizations (the Lausanne Movement and the World Council of Churches) is conducted. Thirdly, in order to find if there could be any middle way between the two approaches in a practical sense, a case study over the Love and Peace Society (LAPS) in Hong Kong is done.

The thesis comes to the conclusion that mission should always be dynamic and contextualized Christian action rather than a static set of theory. Mission towards Muslims should always be a two-way mission rather than a condescending single vector, while conversion of both sides should be desired, welcomed and acknowledged.

神道學碩士論文摘要：

中庸之道：穆斯林宣教路線的再思

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據統計，現時全世界大約 7 億人口當中，伊斯蘭教徒佔 1.3 億，為基督宗教信徒之後世界第二大的宗教信仰群體。隨著全球化的發展、人口族群的遷移，現今穆斯林的足跡遍佈，穆斯林作為基督徒鄰舍的事實，隨處可証。

一直以來，宣教皆為基督徒所關懷的主要課題之一，而向穆斯林－這群「未得之民」傳福音，介紹他們認識耶穌、進入永生，更是他們無可推諉的責任。雖然不同的宗派、教會、機構所推行的宣教活動、內容皆有所不同，不過，基督徒向穆斯林宣教的進路，主要有兩個：(一)傳道式，以改變信仰、領人歸主為最終目的；(二)宗教對話，以彼此了解、互相尊重、認識為依歸。

然而，此兩種向度皆各具爭議點，所以透過本論文，筆者嘗試替「向穆斯林宣教」此一課題另闢一條既可行而又合乎中道之路。

筆者透過先去了解伊斯蘭教跟基督教過去的歷史及現今之關係，再剖析兩間國際基督教組織(洛桑運動及普世教會協會)的宣教立場、策略，最後以神愛與和平協會作為個案研究，審視並探討向穆斯林宣教的一條有別於改教或僅止於對談的可行之路。

宣教，其實並非靜止不變的一套理論，而是動態並具處境性的一種信仰行動。向穆斯林的宣教，一直以來被解讀為單向性的付出、接納，又或施予拯救的一種態度，宣教路線的中庸之道，更重要的認知，乃是了解到宣教並非僅為單一的向度(施與受)，而是培養雙方面皆願意聆聽並敢於被對方改變的開放性。

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Introduction

Globalization, immigration, the changing pattern of mobility all contributed to the contemporary social diversity. Living in a global village, we could find the distinction of national boundaries blurred: the distance between different cultures, religious, racial, nationalities are shortened.

The dispersion of Muslims to various parts of the world and their roles as our colleagues, classmates, and neighbors who live next door is a contemporary reality. The era of cultural, racial and religious isolation is over while the time for solidarity and unification has come of age.

Despite the similarities the two religions Islam and Christianity embrace, the relationship between their believers is remains a complicated. This matter which makes Christian mission towards Muslims a continuously controversial debate.

In order to provide a clear and vivid picture of how their relationship changed alongsidethrough the history, firstly, I would like to state and collate their historical and scriptural backgrounds that contributed to the Muslim-Christian conflict. When we scrutinize and explore to the increasingly dispersed religious situation in the 21st century, the worldwide concern over Muslim-Christian relation is then revealed.

Chapter 1

The Root of Muslim-Christian Conflict and Overview of the Contemporary Situation

1.1 Scriptural Reasoning between the Bible and the Qur'an

1.1.1 The Bible and Qur'an

Significances of Both to the Two Religions

Since the heart of identity of one religion is to be found in tradition's scripture,¹ the Bible and the Qur'an are both considered "Holy" (the Holy Scripture or the Holy Book respectively) to each of its own faith community.

The Bible is for Christians the written form of God's inspired words through human hands. Many Christians take their social and moral values from the Bible as the legitimate ones.² The word Bible comes from the Greek βιβλία which means "books", thus it is not a single but a collection of writings which covers almost every aspect of life.³ It consists of two parts which are known as the Old and the New Testament, both the Christians and Muslims accept the Torah as God's revelation to the humankind.

Islam is Arabic and means submission (the acceptance of Allah's commands) and

¹ David Ford, "An interfaith wisdom: scriptural reasoning between Jews, Christians and Muslims," *Modern Theology* 22, no. 3 (2006: 345-366).

² Though there are discussions on the infallibility of the Bible alongside the history within Christianity, it is for Christians generally to value the Bible as an authorized rule of life. Carl Lofmark, *What is the Bible?* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1992), 8.

³ Carl Lofmark, *What is the Bible?* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1992), 11.

obedience (putting Allah's command into practice).⁴ The Qur'an,⁵ translated directly as recitation, is believed to be revealed by Allah (the only God) and conveyed by the prophet Muhammad through the angel Jibbrail (Gabriel),⁶ the Muslims therefore live by it for it is an expression of Divine will.⁷ It speaks not only about the attributes of Allah and His power, but also about the relationship and responsibility of Him with humans.⁸ It is also the first source of Islamic law which teaches a set of moral and juridical injunctions.⁹

Though there are at least four denominational groups of Muslims, they agree on viewing Qur'an for guidance, laws, regulation and the mode of life.

Christians agree that the Bible may be translated into other languages and needs continuous interpretation to be understood since Christianity is a religion started with the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the very first place. On the other hand, as the Qur'an is literally inspired by Allah, all Muslims are bound to learn Arabic and study the Qur'an in this original written language.¹⁰ Some even equate Jesus with the Qur'an and Mary with Muhammad by their natures: Jesus as Word become flesh while Muhammad as the device to convey the message.¹¹

Complex Relationship

There are mainly two directions on how scholars view the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an.

⁴ *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, vol. 2, ed. Richard C. Martin (New York: Thomson/Gale, 2004), 17.

⁵ Qur'an means recitation or the sacred text which is recited.

⁶ *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, vol. 1, 107.

⁷ *Ibid*, 112.

⁸ *Ibid*, 45.

⁹ *Ibid*, 107.

¹⁰ The power of Qur'an's words in Arabic was proved in the early days. See Clarice Swisher, *The spread of Islam*, ed. Bruno Leone (San Diego: Greenhaven, 1999), 18.

¹¹ *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, 112.

From a general point of view, the Bible has been written and compiled before the Qur'an. Scholars, such as Abraham Geiger and Richard Bell agree on the influences of Judaism and Christianity in the development of Islamic belief and in the formation of the Qur'an.¹² They found there are clear indicators such as observable literary, linguistic, conceptual and ritual parallels between them. The traces of the Jewish scripture, the pre-Islamic Arabic traditions and the Bible are to be found within it.¹³

While some western scholars in the 19th century tried to demonstrate that the biblical ideas and figures in the Qur'an were borrowed from Judaism or Christianity, there are other scholars in the last third of the 20th century who attempted to explore the intertwined relationship between them by means of historical philology.¹⁴ They found the Qur'an could be viewed as "a product of the co-participation of reading God's Holy Word by Jews, Christians, and Muslims".¹⁵

Regardless of whether the Qur'an was influenced by the Bible or emerged through co-participation creation, when reading both Bible and Qur'an, the parallels between the two are obvious: the description of the great acts of God; the creation of the world; the choice of Moses as liberator and law giver; the promulgation of the Commandments and the condemnation of apostasy etc.¹⁶ However ironically, there are disagreements and even contradictive ideas which relate mainly with the core beliefs of the two.

¹² Geiger's thoughts and insights were somehow under the influence of the Enlightenment and rather a scientific approach which required paralleling the search for the other texts. *Bible and Qur'an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. John C. Reeves (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004), 7-15, 24.

¹³ Reuven Firestone, "The Qu'ran and the Bible: Some Modern Studies of Their Relationship," in *Bible and Qur'an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, 7-15.

¹⁴ Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby, "A prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qu'ran and the Bible," in *Bible and Qur'an*, 25.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ M. S. Seale, *Qur'an and Bible: Studies in Interpretation and Dialogue* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 71.

1.1.2 How do Muslims Read the Bible

Since the Qur'an is the fullest expression of the Divine will, Muslims could not draw parallels with the Bible.¹⁷ The Bible is merely a distortion of God's word by the Christians. Against the scholarly studies, the Qur'an claims a different kind of relationship: "This Qur'an... is a confirmation of that which was revealed before it, and an explanation of the Scripture" (Sura 10:38).¹⁸

Ishmael: the Ancestral Root

Both the Bible for Christians and the Qur'an for Muslims have the record of Abraham. While Christians view Abraham's second son Isaac, the son of Sarah as their forefather, Muslims on the other hand regard Ishmael, the son of the Egyptian Hagar as their ancestor.¹⁹ In contradiction to the biblical tradition (Genesis 21:1-2), most Islamic scholars designate Ishmael rather than Isaac as the victim in the story of Abraham scarifying his son (Qur'an 37:99-113).²⁰

For both Jews and Christians, the Ishmael text of Genesis is a key to a theological understanding of Islam. Genesis is theologically interested in the history of Isaac, the father of Israel, more than that of Ishmael. Biologically speaking, Ishmael was the firstborn son of Abraham who claimed to be the son of the "flesh" (i.e. of human potential).²¹ Isaac was the second son. Since he was the answer from God to Sarah's prayer, he was also claimed for Christian as the son of promise (through God's

¹⁷ *Islamic interpretations of Christianity*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 5.

¹⁸ M. S. Seale, 71.

¹⁹ Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Abraham: Sign of Hope for Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 130-1.

²⁰ John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6.

²¹ Karl-Josef Kuschel, 132-3.

grace).²²

Muhammad as the last Prophet of Islam makes his deepest religious concern specifically through Abraham and Ishmael.²³ Against Christians' affirmation of the chosen Isaac-Jacob-Israel line, Muslims believe in God's inclusive grace and blessing of Ishmael as the son of Abraham.²⁴ God's blessing through Abraham continues not only in Isaac/Israel but also in the outcast Ishmael/Islam and his descendants.²⁵ Some scholars even suggested that Islam should be interpreted as "being self-consciously a movement involving the descendants of Hagar".²⁶

The Human Jesus

Muslims look upon Jesus as a great model of holiness who preformed miracles and was born by the Virgin Mary, but at the same time see him in equal footing with other prophets.²⁷ Jesus has no place in salvation as salvation comes directly from God. The divinity of Jesus in the Qur'an is being denied because otherwise polytheism would be the result.

Although Muslims agree with the claim of Jesus being the Messiah (Sura 3:40), he is no more than a human servant, a messenger or a prophet of God,²⁸ and as such does not reach the same spiritual height as Muhammad.²⁹ Muslims understand that

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 154-5.

²⁴ Genesis states also God's words to Abraham, "... I will make a nation of the son of the Slave woman also, because he is your offspring" (Genesis 21:12-13) and in Genesis 21:18, "I will make him a great nation." Karl-Josef Kuschel, 134.

²⁵ Ishmael traditions of Genesis are still a theological challenge for both the Jews and Christians, for it affirmed Ishmael bears the sign of God's covenant that Jews also bear. Karl-Josef Kuschel, 134, 210.

²⁶ Patricia Crone, Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 3-15.

²⁷ Jauques Jomier, *The Bible and the Koran*, trans. Edward P. Arbez (New York: Desclee Co., 1964), 79.

²⁸ M. S. Seale, 76-7. See also *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, vol. 1, 35.

²⁹ Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 64.

God first revealed himself to Moses (the Torah), then to Jesus (the Gospel) and finally to Muhammad (the Qur'an).³⁰

The belief in the redemptive power of Jesus is different as well. Islam maintains that each person is responsible for its own acts and no one could help,³¹ and the crucifixion of Jesus is no more than a scandal.³²

Exegesis of the Bible

Since Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the final and complete word of God and Muhammad as the last prophets of all, what is written in the Bible is somehow a corrupted or distorted version during the process of compilation. "Though Muslims accuse Christian of falsifying, corrupting and changing the meaning of their scripture, the Bible is still extensively used in illustrating and reinforcing major Islamic teachings."³³

Although Muslims always maintain that the truth inside the Bible had been corrupted in four ways (namely concealed, distorted, hidden and altered),³⁴ they nevertheless still strongly desire to use the Bible to show the foretelling of Muhammad in it.³⁵

³⁰ John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7.

³¹ Jauques Jomier, *The Bible and the Koran*, 87.

³² M. S. Seale, 64.

³³ Mutei, Joseph M, "The Bible: Classical and Contemporary Muslim Attitudes and Exegesis," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31, no. 3 (2007: 207-220).

³⁴ This is why Jesus, when comes to Christianity, becomes the Son of God whose death redeemed and atoned for humankind's original sin. It is for Muslims an erroneous doctrine. John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 76.

³⁵ Mutei, Joseph M, 207-220.

1.2 Historical Background of their Complex Relationship

“It is important to make clear that Christian-Muslim relations over the centuries have developed on a kind of layer by layer basis: what happened in one community in one generation produced a reaction in the other community which in turn contributed to the development of formulations and attitudes in the first community in later generations.”³⁶ In order to get a better understanding of how these layers developed to the present day, it is necessary to examine the history of how Islam evolved and how it developed a relatively traumatic relationship with Christianity.

1.2.1 The Emergence of Islam

In ancient times, the Arab tribes had already had strong beliefs and regularly worshiped at Mecca to the same one God that Jews and Christians worshiped. However, they felt as outsiders because God had neither sent them a prophet nor a book as their counterparts.³⁷ It was not until Muhammad, a member of the Quraish tribe, started to receive his call to prophethood and recite messages directly from God at his forties, that they received a prophet of their own.³⁸ Islam then originated in the very same year (610) and Muhammad continued to proclaim his message in Mecca and Medina until his death in 632.³⁹

It was the original purpose for Muhammad to be merely a warner to his own Quraish people to return to the practice of caring for the disadvantaged people and praise the

³⁶ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 3.

³⁷ Besides worshiping the same God with Christians and Jews, many Arabs were at the same time still devoted to pagan gods and goddesses. However, our purpose is not to discuss what they actually believed in pre-Islamic time, but how did Islam, the worshiping of one God (monotheism) start. Clarice Swisher, *The Spread of Islam*, ed. Bruno Leone (San Diego: Greenhaven, 1999), 13.

³⁸ Clarice Swisher, *The Spread of Islam*, 13-4.

³⁹ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, 19.

virtues of being generous to the needy.⁴⁰ The fundamental Islamic objective of moderation (or middle way), accepting differences (tolerance towards other faith at the beginning), praying five times a day facing Mecca and practicing polygamy (form of taking care of women and widows) gradually came of age and became Islamic traditions.⁴¹

1.2.2 The Muslims Expansion from the 8th Century

In only 100 years time after the death of Muhammad (632), under the first four caliphs (632-661) and the first dynasty of the Umayyads (661-750), Muslims not only spread throughout the Arabian peninsula, but also conquered Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Persia and further east as far as India. Indeed Muslims not only succeeded in conquering the whole of North Africa from Alexandria to Tangier, but also subjected almost all of Spain by force of arms.⁴²

By 642, the Muslims had conquered and established its control over the majority of the Persian Empire, Iraq, Iran and a rather large part of the Byzantine Empire.⁴³ Muslims continued their expansion into the next century and incorporated North Africa, Spain and the central Asia. In the 130 years after Muhammad's death, there was a rapid expansion extending from Europe to China.⁴⁴

There are different theories to explain the Islamic expansion: traditionally, some scholars believe that the Christian empires were exhausted from several hundred

⁴⁰ It was for Muhammad to propagate his messages of tolerance, equity and piety. Clarice Swisher, *The Spread of Islam*, 17.

⁴¹ As mentioned before, there are quite a few groups of Muslims such as Sunnis, Shiites (while Sufi could be in either one of them) but most of all they take these traditional values/practices accordingly. Clarice Swisher, 19-20.

⁴² Karl-Josef Kuschel, 130-1

⁴³ Hugh Goddard, 34.

⁴⁴ Clarice Swisher, 71.

years of mutual warfare, making it easy for the Arabic, or Islamic invasion;⁴⁵ more recent theories revealed methodically planned and military maneuvers which fulfill economical and political needs for the “natural” growth and development of a community.⁴⁶

1.2.3 Traumatized Relationship

There were two main directions of opinion and attitude for Christians towards Muslims: a fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham and Ishmael or a Christian heresy.⁴⁷ Muslims initially took a fairly militant antagonism towards Christians that soon turned into a much more tolerant and conciliatory attitude.⁴⁸

In the eighth century Saint John of Damascus, an official of the Muslim state (but obviously a Christian), declared Islam to be a Christian heresy and the antichrist.⁴⁹ His objective was to equip the Christians in his time to deal with conquering Muslims when he describes Islam as “a deceptive superstition of the Ishmaelites”.⁵⁰ Ever since the “judgment” and criticism claimed by John, a new and more negative interpretations of Islam began to emerge.⁵¹

Historically, the Muslim attitude towards other religions, especially Judaism and Christianity, was rather tolerant. However the Muslim-Christian relations have deteriorated over time under the influence of conflicts and grievances from the six Crusades and European colonialism to contemporary politics alongside the history.⁵²

⁴⁵ This traditional theory saw the invasion as a random or unorganized co-incidence/opportunity. Clarice Swisher, *The Spread of Islam*, 74.

⁴⁶ Clarice Swisher, 74-5.

⁴⁷ Hugh Goddard, 48.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ayoub, Mahmoud M, “Roots of Muslim-Christian conflict,” *Muslim World* 79, no. 1 (1989: 25-45).

⁵⁰ Hugh Goddard, 39 and see also M. S. Seale, 63.

⁵¹ Hugh Goddard, 41.

⁵² John L. Esposito, 77.

Some of the first Crusaders and their supporters who took part in the 1095-1099 movement of militant Christianity were convinced that they had the obligation to recapture Jerusalem-the Holy Land.⁵³ Besides this religious motivation, there were also various reasons for taking up the cross and fight, such as material interests including the desire to acquire land or the longing for fame and glory.⁵⁴

Thousands of crusaders' lives (even children in the Child Crusade) were lost during the Crusades and based on credible sources, over 40,000 Muslims were massacred by the Crusaders within two days in Jerusalem.⁵⁵ It was considered to be proof of bloodthirsty Christian fanaticism. It became worse with the outburst of the 2nd and 3rd crusades which did not merely lead to a huge number of deaths but also put a huge burden on the citizens through heavy taxation in order to cover the costs of wars.

The conquering and re-conquering between Christians and Muslims lasted for over 800 years.⁵⁶ Along with the religious wars, the suspicions of Christian missionaries' intention to colonize (or Christian conversion) the Islamic counterparts continue to be perceived.

It seems that subconsciously conquest was Christians' implementation of their mission,⁵⁷ but the mission of Christ should be a mission of love which transcends all political and religious considerations. Throughout history, ever since the

⁵³ Jerusalem has been, in many important respects, the focus of Muslim-Christian relations. Hugh Goddard, 84.

⁵⁴ The crusades as the violence practiced under the banner of the Cross was a simple way to wipe out debt and to seize Jewish gold with impunity. Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 58.

⁵⁵ Hugh Goddard, 85-6.

⁵⁶ We could see from a map illustrating how widely Islam spread and how Christianity re-conquered their lands through history. Clarice Swisher, *The Spread of Islam*, 26.

⁵⁷ One would as well claim that the European history is a history of conquest.

Crusades and especially since the Reformation, the mission has sacrificed love for self-fulfillment and sectarian competition.⁵⁸ Centuries of conflict between the two groups (not only religious, but also political, economical, social and psychological), with mistrust and hostility towards each other are the tragic results.

1.3 Overview of the Situation in the 21st Century⁵⁹

Both the Christian and Muslim communities have their geographical and historical origins in the Middle-East. They have expanded in different directions and became influential in different regions of the world.⁶⁰ Islam is the second largest religion in the world with over 1.3 billion followers today.⁶¹ The annual growth rate of people becoming (announcing themselves openly) Muslims is also alarming at a rate of 1.9% per year.⁶² The so-called balance of power between the two could be well observed.

1.3.1 Europe

Despite a flourishing Christian development throughout the human history, Islam is

⁵⁸ Ayoub, Mahmoud M, "Roots of Muslim-Christian conflict." *Muslim World* 79, no. 1 (1989: 25-45).

⁵⁹ The reasons why I take only these three regions of the world into a closer glimpse are 1) Europe as the origin of Christianity (yet the senders of missionaries for centuries) and the recent statistic does show the most alarming increasing rate of Muslims (yet converts); 2) Asia and the Middle East as the Centre of the Islamic power and the world's most highly populated region where the two religions are in conflict; 3) Africa as the very first region where Muhammad advised the Muslims to migrate and seek shelter of and this is also the most highly populated Muslim region of the world, almost half of her population is claimed Muslim.

<http://worldupdates.tripod.com/islamintheworld/id25.htm> (accessed 19th November, 2009)

⁶⁰ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, 2.

⁶¹ <http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501030310/chart1.html> (accessed 19th November 2009)

⁶² According to the statistics from a U.K.-based research institute <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20060106/christian-population-growth-rate-higher-than-world-less-than-muslims-hindus/index.html> (accessed 21st November, 2009). Observing the estimation of world religions statistic, the annual growth rate of most of the religions are in fact all rising, but then that of Islam is at the most observable rate. However, there are some problems in estimating or to obtain an accurate number of Muslims in Europe, for religious affiliation is not a question on population census and it is rather difficult in getting an accurate number of conversions from country to country. Jocelyn Cesari, *When Islam and democracy meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 9-10.

still considered to be Europe's fastest growing religion in recent years. According to Time Asia, there are over 40 million Muslims (around 7% of the whole population) in Europe.⁶³ The immigration rate from other politically unstable countries such as Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Morocco, and Bosnia is rising.⁶⁴ The average birth rate among the settled Muslims also leads to a rapid increase in the Muslim population.⁶⁵

From the early Muslims moving into Europe, the population has become the largest religious minority in Western Europe.⁶⁶ The Muslim population in French is the largest in Western Europe while that of Switzerland has doubled in recent years.⁶⁷

A saying in the United Kingdom describes this trend with the following words: "The Churches are closing down while the Mosques are opening up."⁶⁸ A 2001 census records around 1,591,000 Muslims in the UK, around 2.8% of its whole population, the predominantly Christian country.⁶⁹

Today, Germany has about four million Muslims—5% of the population, making Islam the second largest religion. There are more Muslims than the population in Lebanon and there are twice as many mosques as in the United States; young Muslims there describe themselves as more religious than their parents when they are in a country where fewer Christians go to church.⁷⁰ Most of them are

⁶³ http://www.islamicpopulation.com/Europe/europe_general.html (accessed 21st November 2009)

⁶⁴ Some of them came from the 60s when the time Europe opened up for "guest workers", while some of them who came in the 90s were mainly refugees and asylum seekers from Iran, Iraq, Somalia etc.

⁶⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm> (accessed 19th November, 2009)

⁶⁶ Jocelyn Cesari, *When Islam and democracy meet*, 9.

⁶⁷ Data collected by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies in 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm#france> (accessed 19th November, 2009); see also data from the *Swiss Federal Statistical Office* (2003), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm#switzerland>

⁶⁸ <http://www.hindujagruti.org/news/1600.html> (accessed 19th November, 2009)

⁶⁹ Data from Office for National Statistics (2001), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm#uk> (accessed 19th November, 2009)

⁷⁰

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/october-30-2009/muslims-in-germany/4787/> (accessed 19th November, 2009)

immigrants from Turkey and Morocco (like the case in the Netherland), and they are now already the third Muslim generation.⁷¹

The tensions between Christian and Muslim in these countries are rising.

1.3.2 Asia

There are many countries in Asia that regard Islam as its state religion and consist of overwhelmingly Muslim population: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bahrain, Jordan, Libya etc. About 670 million Muslims out of the 1.57 billion of the whole Muslim population are to be found in Asia.⁷² The general expansion of Islam to these countries can be classified into two types of movements: a movement of military conquests, which expanded the Islamic empire from Arabia to West Asia, North Africa, Spain, Central Asia and further to Eastern Europe; and a movement of dedicated Muslim individuals, who expanded or spread the faith as merchants or missionaries.⁷³

China, an officially atheist country, the world's largest populated country with approximately 1.3 billion people (compare with over 1.2 billion of Muslims all over the world),⁷⁴ consists of approximately 24 million Muslim today with an increasing rate. Muslims virtually dominated the trading business in China during the Sung Dynasty but were soon oppressed during the Qing Dynasty and later even brutally

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² <http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501030310/chart3.html> (accessed 19th November, 2009), The Pew Forum report <http://pewforum.org/uploadedfiles/Topics/Demographics/Muslimpopulation.pdf> (accessed 17th May 2010), see also http://www.islamicpopulation.com/asia/asia_general.html (accessed 21st November, 2009)

⁷³ Carmen A. Abubakar, "The Advent and Growth of Islam in the Philippines," in *Islam in Southeast Asia: political, social, and strategic challenges for the 21st century*, ed. K.S. Natham, Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), 45.

⁷⁴ According to the world factbook by CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html> (accessed 20th November, 2009)

suppressed by the communist due to political reasons.⁷⁵ However by 1978 after religious freedom was declared, the number of declared Chinese Muslims raised. The growth of the Islam belief appears concentrated among ethnic minorities,⁷⁶ but there are also converts of Han Chinese.

The Philippines is predominantly a Roman Catholic country. However, one can also observe a growing number of Muslims, some of them even fighting for the establishment of an Islamic state within the country.⁷⁷ The process of Islamization is taking place distinctively in the Southern Philippines where intermarriage of Muslim missionaries or traders and local people can be observed.⁷⁸

There are news and journals discussing the difficult relationship between Muslims and Christians within Islamic countries such as violent attacks towards Christians in Indonesia⁷⁹ and Muslims' persecution of Christians in Malaysia.⁸⁰ Along with the religious motivation, there is also very direct economic and local political factors involved.

The conflict between Muslim and Christian communities could be disruptive in these countries due to political, economical and social reasons.

1.3.3 Africa

Around 320 million Muslims live in Africa today.⁸¹ Predominantly Islamic

⁷⁵ Namely import and export business, <http://worldupdates.tripod.com/islamintheworld/id3.html> (20th November, 2009)

⁷⁶ Uygur, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tatar, Tajik ethnic groups etc.

⁷⁷ <http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501030310/map.html> (accessed 20th November, 2009)

⁷⁸ Carmen A. Abubakar, "The Advent and Growth of Islam in the Philippines," 51.

⁷⁹ <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5485&l=1> (accessed 20th November, 2009)

⁸⁰ For instance, persecution of the Muslim converts.

<http://www.muhammadtube.com/videos/1388/malaysia:-muslim-persecution-of-christians> (accessed 20th November, 2009)

⁸¹ <http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501030310/chart3.html> (accessed 20th November, 2009)

countries in Africa include parts of Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Guinea, Tunisia, Sudan etc, over 90% of the population in North Africa and more than 50% in Western Africa are Muslim.⁸² In Tanzania, the Muslim population encompasses over 13 million people.⁸³ The overall Muslim population in the whole Africa has increased by approximately 8% within 30 years time.⁸⁴

In contrast to some of the Asian or the Middle Eastern Islamic countries, Christian-Muslim relations are comparatively harmonious in Africa and religious conflicts are less heard. A strong emphasis on human relationships and the sharing of common cultural heritage and language might be one of the reasons,⁸⁵ while the religious practice distribution that Muslims predominate to the north and Christians and animists to the south also give rise to this rather harmonious relationship.⁸⁶

Intermarriages between Muslims and Christians in Africa are not uncommon and the conversion from Christianity to Islam after marriage is also a common rule, while it is not the case vice versa.⁸⁷ The number of Muslims outnumbers Christians through both conversions after marriage and the encouragement of high birth rate.

The analysis of these three regions provides for three levels and dimensions of how Muslim evolved to the contemporary situation, offering a better understanding and

⁸² *Islam in Africa: perspectives for Christian-Muslim relations: the WARC consultation, 6 to 10 June 1994, The Grace Bandawe Conference Centre, Blantyre, Malawi*, ed H. S. Wilson (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1995), 9 and also http://www.islamicpopulation.com/africa/africa_general.html for the most updated details up to 2008 (accessed 21st November 2009)

⁸³ The Pew Forum report <http://pewforum.org/uploadedfiles/Topics/Demographics/Muslimpopulation.pdf> (accessed 17th May 2010)

⁸⁴ Compare with 40% in 1975 according to the WARC in *Islam in Africa: perspectives for Christian-Muslim relations* with 48% in 2008 according to http://www.islamicpopulation.com/africa/africa_general.html (accessed 21st November 2009)

⁸⁵ *Islam in Africa: perspectives for Christian-Muslim relations*, 28.

⁸⁶ However as dangerous as it may seems, even religious tension is not that a great concern for the African but it could easily spawn civil wars and national crisis due to the economic, social, political and military reasons. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/6036> (accessed 21st November, 2009)

⁸⁷ <http://www.win1040.com/WeeklyPrayerPoints/dpp103106b.pdf>

Chapter 2

Survey of Different Christian Mission Approaches to Muslim

2.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter covered the roots of the Muslim-Christian conflict and also examined the contemporary situation. The conditions of how Christians co-exist with Muslims are diverse. There are places where Christian outnumbered Muslim while the other Muslims dominate the community politically and socially. Mobilization, movements, and increased interdependences of nations and societies have given rise to this contemporary tendency.¹ Almost everywhere Christians live together with neighbors of other faiths, Muslims remain the closest neighbors in the Christian community.

Ever since the 1st International Protestant Conference in Cairo in 1906, there have been more conferences on the discussions of mission to Muslims.² These conferences show two different approaches: proselytism (to make converts) and dialogue (emphasizing equality in relationship).³ They can be seen as having developed more or less into the Evangelical and Ecumenical approaches to mission.

There were debates over the meaning of mission: one side with ideology taking mission as humanization, or in other words, mission as social concern, while on the

¹ *Vancouver to Canberra, 1983-1990: report of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches to the Seventh Assembly*, Thomas F. Best ed. (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 130.

² *Ministry in Islamic contexts: report of a consultation*, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (London: International Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, 1996), 5.

³ *Ministry in Islamic contexts: report of a consultation*, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 5.

other side, mission equates the evangelization of the lost.⁴

Some regard dialogue as a betrayal of the gospel while others would only allow dialogue as a tool of mission;⁵ some think mission attitude is more or less competitive and rivalry when Christians want only to proselytize and keep on exploiting the weakness and “faults” of others.⁶ Others might even deduce conversion as the excuse for colonization.

The two international organizations show the contrasting views: The Lausanne Movement (the World Congress on Evangelism)⁷ - calling the Church to remain faithful in proclaiming the Gospel to all nations by conversion; and the World Council of Churches - the pioneer coming up to encourage mutual respect and understanding through inter-faith dialogue.⁸ In this chapter, I would illustrate what these two approaches really mean and what the two organization so far have done.

2.2 Christian-Muslim Interfaith Dialogue: The World Council of Churches

⁴ Evangelism versus social concern/humanism. Roger Hdlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in mission (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1997)*, from Al Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne: radical evangelical mission in global-local perspective* (Carlisle: Regnum, 2008), 28.

“The primary mission of the church is saving souls.” Mission equates evangelism is that some evangelical leaders would have agreed fifty years ago. See also, Al Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne: radical evangelical mission in global-local perspective*, xiii.

⁵ *Dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies: minutes of the fifth Meeting of the Working Group Bali / Indonesia, Dec.-Jan. 198; 1982* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 26.

⁶ “Group report on Christian-Muslim Relations from theological consultation on Dialogue in Community Chiang Mai,” in *Christians meeting Muslims: WCC papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977), 60.

⁷ The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement share the common commitment with the Lausanne Movement to world evangelization. It is the conviction of the leaders that they are complementary to one another. The director of the Lausanne Movement and of the Manila Congress Dr. Thomas Wang was also the founder and chairman of the AD 2000 movement. *Making Christ known: historic mission documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989*, John Stott ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), xxii.

⁸ The Lausanne Movement at the first place claimed against the “unfaithfulness” of the WCC to “dialogue” people with other religions. Al Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne: radical evangelical mission in global-local perspective*, 28.

2.2.1 Starting Point

The World Council of Church (WCC) is “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁹

In 1965 some Christian scholars (from seventeen countries in different continents) gathered together to discuss the Christian approach to the Muslims.¹⁰ During the 60s, Christians’ attention was drawn to an increasing number of Muslim immigrants in the West.

Observing the divisive force between different religions alongside history and especially that between Muslim and Christian as illustrated in the 1st chapter on their traumatic wounds toward each other, WCC recognized the needs to bring together these two co-inhabited group of people, in a harmonious and remedied way. “Dialogue” is then designed to get to a deeper level of this commitment.

WCC set up a Sub-unit on “Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies” (DFI) in 1971 and it had been established to assist the churches in their endeavor to understand and to relate to religious plurality.¹¹

Three tasks, or to say, three levels of action and ideology are guiding the work of DFI: The primary task and predominant role of DFI is to enable meetings or to seek community, which promotes understanding and dialogue between Christians and

⁹ Ans J. van der Bent, *What in the world is the World Council of Churches?: an interview with Philip Potter* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 35.

¹⁰ *Christians meeting Muslims: WCC papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977), 12.

¹¹ *Vancouver to Canberra*, 131.

persons of the other faiths.¹² The secondary task is to foster awareness within the churches about the reality of religious plurality, and the need to respond to it in a creative way.¹³ The third emphasis is a logical consequence of the second for attention is paid to theological issues raised in the context of dialogue.¹⁴

This DFI unit provides a space so that certain kinds of theological questions can be explored. It also helps to articulate the theological issues which the churches faced before and should be facing today.¹⁵

The Sub-unit meets almost every year or once in two years. WCC also works in close collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogues of the Roman Catholic Church and has staff meetings together to explore issues in interfaith dialogue.¹⁶ Since different societies and countries have their own religious environment, there is no one single guideline on how to develop Muslim-Christian relations. But then three main topics affecting Christian-Muslim relations on a day-to-day basis were taken up for debate: religion and family, religion and education, and religion and the state.¹⁷

WCC's guidelines on dialogue are to allow participants to describe and witness to their faith on their own terms. In order to help the unit and all the Christians in the member churches to understand what this Dialogue is aimed at, "Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies" was published in 1979 for reference.¹⁸

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Not only to talk and share but work it out. *Vancouver to Canberra*, *ibid.*

¹⁴ For instance, what has dialogue to say to our understanding and practice of mission? What about conversion?

¹⁵ *Vancouver to Canberra*, 131.

¹⁶ Ibid, 132.

¹⁷ Ibid, 134.

¹⁸ Details could be found online,

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/guidelines-on-dialogue-with-people-of-living-faiths-and-ideologies.html#c22030>

Besides discussion on history, WCC has been involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue on the local, regional and international levels.¹⁹ More than theology, the discussions are about faith, science, technology, ecology and politics. In the beginning, there was little Muslim involvement. In fact, not even one Muslim came to join in the meetings., However, as time passed by, more and more Muslims became involved.²⁰ It is not only the Christians who initiated the conversation. The Christians were also invited to the Islamic Summit Meeting (1974) and the Islamic Conference (1976).²¹ Since then, working groups meet once a year to discuss inter-faith guidelines, to report on Christian-Muslim (or with other religions) concerns and to look for future relationship development. Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation is still one of the six program areas that WCC focus today.²²

2.2.2 Theological Background: Ecumenical Considerations on Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Instead of compulsively projecting their own belief onto others, WCC affirms a theology of creation that affirms the presence and the work of God in all cultures: it is in Him all things and all people are to be united.²³

Starting in 1948, WCC has been thought to be influenced by Bonhoeffer.²⁴ His idea of

¹⁹ Includes meetings at Cartigny (1969), Ajaltoun (1970), Broumana (1972), Colombo (1974), Legon (1974), Hong Kong (1975), and Chambesy (1976). Different memorandums from WCC published in Geneva concern the relationship of the two ever since 60s. *Christians meeting Muslims: WCC papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977), 1-2.

²⁰ Delegates from other religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism etc. are equally invited since DFI is not a unit only dealing with Muslim-Christian relationship but also with other religions (traditional religions are also included).

²¹ *Christians meeting Muslims: WCC papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue*, 2.

²² *The other five are* 1) WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century 2) Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality 3) Public Witness: Addressing Power, Affirming Peace 4) Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation 5) Education and Ecumenical Formation, *An Introduction to the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 2008), 2.

²³ To attempt Christian unity is in fact WCC's goal. "Seeking Community: The common search of people of various faiths, cultures, and ideologies," in *Christians meeting Muslims*, 44.

²⁴ Martien E. Brinkman, *Progress in unity?: fifty years of theology within the World Council of Churches*,

“religiousless (or religionless) Christianity” resonated with the dialogue approaches where religion (Christianity) is more than faith. Bonhoeffer does not reject religions per se but regard religion as “the human attempt to construct a system of beliefs that restrict God's freedom to self-reveal”.²⁵ For him, “religionless Christianity” was “a direct challenge to the supposition that humans had some intrinsic religious orientation as manifest in religious (Christian) culture”.²⁶

Dietrich Bonhoeffer also believes that a religionless Christianity would be limited to two things: *prayer* and *righteous action* among humanity as Jesus once demonstrated. He is the model for us to follow that to bring people together rather than segregate people by oppressive religious force.²⁷

WCC seems to move mission from an ecclesiastical issue to an ecumenical task. However, according to the General Secretary of WCC in 1972, Rev. Dr Philip Potter, there are claims WCC is far from doing real God mission by opening dialogue with other faiths. He advocated that the unity of the church has been and remains the goal, for ecclesiastic could not be narrowly defined.²⁸ “The Christian Gospel creates community but not Christianity”,²⁹ to seek a community of common searching is what the Sub-unit of DFI of WCC longs for.³⁰

There are theological significance of the prayer life and spiritual history practiced by non-Christian religions. The WCC encourages the congregations of member churches

1945-1995: a study guide (Louvain: Eerdmans, 1995), 152.

²⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd edition, online version: http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/mcgrath/textbook/chap1Q_A/chap0017a.asp (accessed 10th May 2010)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kurt Struckmeyer, *Religionless Christianity*: http://followingjesus.org/invitation/religionless_christianity.htm (accessed 10th May 2010)

²⁸ Ans J. van der Bent, *What in the world is the World Council of Churches?: an interview with Philip Potter* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 3.

²⁹ “Seeking Community: The common search of people of various faiths, cultures, and ideologies,” in *Christians meeting Muslims: WCC papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim*, 47.

³⁰ Ibid, 49.

to “open their eyes and hearts” to know and understand the “otherness” of other religions for it can only be done through conscious effort by both sides.³¹

In terms of faith, WCC makes clear that: “we are under the judgment of God and of our fellow human beings, not so much for what we believe or what we say, but for what we do.”³² Salvation depends not only on what you believe or on God, but also implies political and economic liberation.³³ It belongs to God. We therefore dare not stand in judgment of others. While witnessing to our own faith, we seek to understand the ways in which God intends to bring God's purposes to their fulfillment. It is a rather collective, inclusive and social thrust that WCC relies on.

The whole secret of the Christian faith is that it is man-centered because it is God-centered.³⁴ It is because Jesus Christ is the man for others as well as the man who came from God and lived for God.³⁵ Noted that Jesus Christ was not a Christian, he belongs to all. Salvation in Christ has often been too narrowly understood. It is in fact through the Spirit that Christ is at work in everyone's heart.³⁶ WCC believes that Christ is present whenever a Christian sincerely enters into dialogue with another man.³⁷ Jesus Christ came to be our bridge to peace and to break down the mutual indifference and enmities which divided men. Faith involves both, a relationship to God through Jesus Christ and a way of understanding God, man and the world. Therefore, dialogue must be based on both, relationship and mutual understanding.

³¹ *Vancouver to Canberra*, 131.

³² “Consultation of Christians and Muslims on faith, science and technology and the future of humanity, Beirut, November 1977,” in *Dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies: minutes of the Working Group Meeting, May 17-24, 1978, Mt. St. Benedict, Trinidad* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 75.

³³ The WCC Assembly 1973 in Bangkok stated this while the Lausanne Covenant rejected this because it is not biblical at all.

³⁴ Martien E. Brinkman, *Progress in unity? : fifty years of theology within the World Council of Churches, 1945-1995: a study guide*, 157.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Christians meeting Muslims: WCC papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue*, 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

2.2.3 Aim of Inter-Faith Dialogue with Muslims

The fundamental nature of dialogue is a genuine readiness to listen to those we desire to communicate. It requires a readiness to put down one's own assumptions. The main concern should never be to win over the opposite through arguments.³⁸ On the other hand, breaking down barriers of prejudice, indifference, suspicion and fear, and the practical steps to promote understanding, co-operation, and relationships are favorable to genuine dialogue and witness is much desired.³⁹

The WCC sees its role in providing a platform during these meetings for people to express their faith in their own cultural form and a chance for Christians to prepare themselves to be transformed, redeemed and judged in the light of the Gospel during interactions.⁴⁰ Since Muslims are Christians' closest neighbor,⁴¹ dialogues should not be only subjected to world levels, regional groups but also in particular localities.⁴² It was not only timely in the 70s when the speaker from DFI claimed "we are at a time when dialogue is inevitable, urgent, and full of opportunity",⁴³ but as well more applicable nowadays in the 21st century.

A process of "kenosis" (ἐκένωσεν which means emptied)⁴⁴ is involved during the Inter-faith Dialogue which required both bilateral and multilateral encountering.⁴⁵ Dialogue takes place "spontaneously at all levels of society, in various forms, with

³⁸ Such as trying to convince others that Christianity is the only truth religion with the ultimate doctrine or to assume the others are heresy/false gods. *Christians meeting Muslims: WCC papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue*, 16.

³⁹ Ibid, 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 40.

⁴¹ Christianity as the world largest religion while Islam as the 2nd largest, they live as neighbors closer together as the distribution the 1st chapter shown.

⁴² *Christians meeting Muslims*, 23.

⁴³ Ibid, 21.

⁴⁴ This idea comes from the Kenosis Hymn from Philippians 2:5-11, as Christ "emptied Himself" and descended to the earth for the sake of us, Dennis Bratcher, "The Poured-Out Life: The Kenosis Hymn is Context: <http://www.cresourcei.org/kenosis.html>

⁴⁵ *Dialogue with people of living faiths: minutes of the eighth Meeting of the Working Group*, 15.

openness of heart and spirit, instead of self-protective isolation”,⁴⁶ which not merely happens at academic level or simply verbalized but must be alive and through the dynamic contact of life with life.⁴⁷

Dialogue provides us with an atmosphere where we can receive as well as give, listen as well as proclaim. It is essential to dispel the negative attitude (or impression) we have to people of other faiths, which makes proclamation ineffective and irrelevant. If we are not ready or prepared to accept the others in love and acceptance, how would they ever accept us?⁴⁸

WCC believes that real dialogue could be attained only with initiative taken from both sides while the outcome of it is the work of the Spirit. The ultimate goal for dialogue is more than merely talking but most of all, with space and place for silent togetherness and silent listening, strengthening mutual trust and respect.⁴⁹ God calls us to be witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ amidst persons of other faiths.⁵⁰ It is merely by mutual respect and understanding, neither side trying to prove religious truth at the expense of the other.

2.2.4 The WCC's Achievements

As mentioned in March 1969, WCC held the first dialogue meeting camp with Muslims. In a 1971 paper, the group suggested their member churches prepare teaching programs for schools, colleges, universities, or even to send members from their churches to serve in countries other than their own faith. From 1973 onwards,

⁴⁶ *Christians meeting Muslims*, 18, 76-7

⁴⁷ *Dialogue with people of living faiths: minutes of the eighth Meeting of the Working Group*, 15.

⁴⁸ Who are we anyway in the first place to reject other's religion and condemn those are not different from us? A real relationship has to be built and developed so that when one speaks which drawn other to listen and likewise when on listen, the other feels drawn to speak. *Christians meeting Muslims*, 17.

⁴⁹ <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd48-01.html>, see also, *Christians meeting Muslim*, 19.

⁵⁰ *Dialogue with people of living faiths: minutes of the eighth Meeting of the Working Group*, 16.

WCC even started to prepare Christian-Muslim meetings in Southeast Asia and Africa.⁵¹ WCC also encouraged the member churches to work on the local level to ensure that textbooks give an authentic picture of Islam.⁵²

WCC planned the process step by step, firstly dialogue and trust relationship building and secondly, discussion and sharing over cultural, social and political matters. For each group despite their religion, whether Muslims or Hindus, there should be common concerns for justice and peace within the shared community.⁵³

Beside Inter-faith, WCC as well recognizes the need of Intra-faith dialogue which enables different denominations to express their opinions and theological tendencies towards Muslims. In 2006, the WCC proposed dialogue among Christian communities, including Pentecostal and evangelical churches, to explore Christian self-understanding in a world of many religions.⁵⁴

Alongside with the flourishing development of the internet technology, WCC tries to maintain a blog for people of different religions to sign in, read and write.⁵⁵

They are mainly professors, pastors or religious leaders who joined the DFI meetings and gatherings in the past, but recognizing the reformation potential of the youths, starting from 2006, WCC organizes also an annual seminar for young Muslims, Jews and Christians to join and learn together. The dialogue and the other programs related

⁵¹ The first meeting was held in the west, in Switzerland, but later took place in Asia and Africa.

⁵² Suggestion was without doubt proposed but outcome is rather hard to verify. "Group report on Christian-Muslim Relations from theological consultation on Dialogue in Community Chiang Mai," in *Christians meeting Muslim*, 61.

⁵³ *Dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies: minutes of the fifth Meeting of the Working Group Bali / Indonesia, Dec.-Jan. 198; 1982* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 34.

⁵⁴ <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd48-01.html>

⁵⁵ It offers a platform for debate to those within the ecumenical movement who want to build bridges across religious divides and to their partners of different faiths. And the Current Dialogue journal is published annually by the WCC Inter-religious Dialogue team, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/interreligiousdialogue/current-dialogue/magazine.html>

to promote religious harmony is still going on.⁵⁶

2.2.5 Limitations

WCC admits that there are theological significances of prayer life and spiritual history of other religions. Even though there is dialogue between the two, one crucial theological question still concerns many Christians: is Islam a “real” religion that worships God or merely idolatry? As it seems not to be a crucial question for WCC to deal with, it is no wonder that WCC has been accused of being indifferent to evangelism or to conversion of non-Christians.⁵⁷ WCC’s motive might be even interpreted as an “abandonment of the missionary task of specific Christian witness and proclamation”.⁵⁸ Promoting Christ and the Gospel is, at least within the dialogue unit, not emphasized and dialogue simply means encounter through sharing.

The conferences (dialogues) were supposed to be more practical rather than theoretical: “It was to devise mutual co-operation and advise the Division of World Mission and Evangelism how to assist, in the taking of steps to promote greatly increased and more fruitful meetings between Christians and Muslims”.⁵⁹

Without doubt a platform is created on the ideological (or rather: theoretical) level and in the form of keynote addresses or discussions among the religious leaders, pastors,

⁵⁶

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/honest-dialogue-the-basi.html>

⁵⁷ The evangelism here means the general idea of “to convert people of other faiths to be the children of God, Christian”. But we should notice that evangelism could well be extended as what Dr. Paul Löffler in the 4th Assembly stated, “Ecumenical study and action have rediscovered the close links of evangelism to other dimensions of Christian faith and life. They have thereby helped to overcome a narrow concept of evangelism witness while preserving its specific character.” Priscilla Pope-Levison, “Evangelism in the WCC”, in *New directions in mission and evangelization*, James A. Scherer & Stephen B. Bevans ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 126, 131.

⁵⁸ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A theology of mission for today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 379.

⁵⁹ *Christians meeting Muslims*, 13.

scholars or professors.⁶⁰ It is true that WCC's attempt to foster awareness of Inter-faith Dialogue on an international level is fulfilled, but then how far could she reach out to the congregations and yet the community around?

Although in 1976 (planning meeting for the next steps) three specific areas, education, family life, and worship and prayer had been discussed and planned, there is no evidence to show whether these have been put into practice or what the next step really is after all the shows of mutual understanding and respect.

Assemblies are taking place in different locations and organized by different hosts with different denominational backgrounds where minor discrepancies and inconsistencies regarding the topic of evangelism and mission are arising. All conferences and Assemblies have their own theme and focus, but WCC has never shifted away from its original goal, "The goal of the World Council of Churches is not to build a global "super-church", nor to standardize styles of worship, but rather to deepen the fellowship of Christian churches and communities so that they may see in one another authentic expressions of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church".⁶¹ To seek unity and to give a credible witness to the oikoumene, the whole inhabited earth, is what the council and her sub-unit aim at.⁶²

Is it way too theological and ideological rather than pragmatic and practical? It seems WCC has done and fulfilled what she intended.

⁶⁰ As mentioned, WCC starts call on meeting among the youths and maintain a blog for open discussion and sharing, but it seems the "next step" is still unforeseeable.

⁶¹ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/wer-sind-wir/hintergrund.html>

⁶² <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/background.html>

2.3 To Make Disciples of Every Nation: The Lausanne Movement⁶³

2.3.1 Starting Point

In response to the WCC's 1968 and 1973 meetings on World mission and evangelization, over 2700 participants from more than 150 nations gathered together in the first International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne in 1974.⁶⁴

The Lausanne Covenant was worried that the WCC's claim that evangelism to people with other faiths and social responsibility are inseparable would essentially undermine the spread of Christian faith.⁶⁵ The Lausanne Congress was held for the purpose of making possible by a renunciation of fierce pragmatism a return to biblical theology that reemphasize the need to proclaim Jesus Christ "with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God".⁶⁶ For Dr. Billy Graham and many participants, the first hope for the Congress was "To frame a biblical declaration on evangelism".⁶⁷

The participants of the Congress included mission executives, field missionaries,

⁶³ The mission for Lausanne is to further world evangelization by building bridges of understanding and cooperation among Christian leaders everywhere, *Making Christ known: historic mission documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989*, John Stott ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), xxiii, check also <http://www.lausanne.org/about.html>

⁶⁴ *Making Christ known*, 7.

⁶⁵ Al Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne: radical evangelical mission in global-local perspective*, 38.

⁶⁶ The New face of evangelicalism: an international symposium on the Lausanne Covenant, C. René Padilla ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 14.

⁶⁷ While the first Congress slogan for The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization by Dr. Billy Graham was "Let the earth hear his voice".

There are four basic presuppositions behind:

- 1) To stand in the tradition of many movements of evangelism throughout the history of the church
- 2) To convene as one body, obeying one Lord, facing one world with one task (namely evangelization)
- 3) To re-emphasize five biblical concepts: commitment to the authority of the Scripture, the lostness of human beings apart from Christ, salvation in Jesus Christ alone, Christian witness by both word and deed, and the necessity of evangelism for the salvation of souls
- 4) To consider honestly and carefully both the unevangelized world and the church's resources to evangelize the world

Making Christ known, xiii, xiv, 20.

professors, anthropologists and theologians.⁶⁸ On the 4th year of her establishment in 1978, a week-long consultation which was in fact the continuum of the 1974's discussion regarding the responsibilities of North American Christians towards the Muslim world was held.⁶⁹

2.3.2 Theology Behind: Uniqueness and Universality of the Redemptive Christ

Stressing that “to evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ had died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures”, they make sure that those who repent and believe receive the offer of forgiveness and the liberating gift of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰ Christians are meant to evangelize while evangelism is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord.

Contradicting the WCC, the Lausanne Covenant rejects the notion that salvation could be brought forth through political or economic liberation. Even though the message of salvation implies a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination,⁷¹ salvation is ultimately a personal relationship with God and the return of self. They affirm the infallibility and divine authority of both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures, as well as the power of God's word to accomplish His purpose of life.

They also reject the idea of any kind of syncretism and dialogue that would imply that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies.⁷² Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-Man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the

⁶⁸ *Making Christ known*, 119.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 118.

⁷⁰ John Stott, *The Lausanne covenant: an exposition and commentary* (Hong Kong: World Wide Publications, 1975), 20.

⁷¹ *Making Christ known*, 26.

⁷² They would not think that they could learn something about their own God through dialogue with the others. <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>

only mediator between God and people, for “There is no other name by which we must be saved”.⁷³

2.3.3 Aim

In speaking of the people of God, the Lausanne Covenant concentrates on the relations of the church to the world, which refers to the Christians to non-Christian or to the secular society.⁷⁴ Holding the mentality of “our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism” and defining evangelism as “the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as the one and only Savior”, the objective of evangelism is conversion.⁷⁵

The first Lausanne Covenant states that Christians are to turn Muslims “from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.”⁷⁶ The members of the Lausanne Committee agreed that conversion involves not only the conversion to Christ and the participation in church but also a holistic witness in the world.⁷⁷ Conversion is thus inseparable from discipleship and that discipleship involves a radical change in life-style.⁷⁸

For the Lausanne Movement, mission and evangelism are equivalent terms considered to be part of the eternal purpose of God and there is concededly a redemptive purpose for the Muslim world.⁷⁹ It is for them “to issue the gospel invitation we have no liberty

⁷³ <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>

⁷⁴ *Making Christ known*, 10.

⁷⁵ While conversion here implies a radical change of lifestyle. Ibid, 22.

⁷⁶ It was according to Acts 26:18 that assumable those outside Christianity's faith is to be condemned. Ibid, 126.

⁷⁷ Which includes the obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church, the responsibility in servicing the world and admitting one's sense of belonging to Christ. Ibid, 23.

⁷⁸ The New face of evangelicalism: an international symposium on the Lausanne Covenant, C. René Padilla ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 10.

⁷⁹ John Stott, , 5.

to conceal the cost of discipleship”.⁸⁰

Arguing with the term “Dialogue” which WCC tends to use to denote evangelization, the Lausanne Congress commented it as “misused” and simply rejects it. The Lausanne Covenant refuses to confine her mission to the development of better Christian-Muslim relations or to involvement in social service on their behalf, but to evangelize the Muslim world as a whole.⁸¹

Nonetheless, greater respect and understanding of Islamic belief and cultures are expected through open encounter (or dialogue) with Muslims and a more culturally sensitive approach to Muslims is emphasized, yet, the ultimate purpose undoubtedly is to persuade the Muslims to reconcile with the Christian God and become one of the church members.

2.3.4 The Lausanne Movement's Achievements

The Lausanne Movement serves itself as a convener to network Christian leaders and to gather for specific world evangelization topics to pray and work together.⁸² Ever since 1978 the Glen Eyrie conference on Muslim evangelization, a concern group (or Issue-Based Gathering), “the Gospel to Muslim” has been formed. They discuss over evangelism from time to time with new insights and compromise.

The 2nd International Congress on World Evangelization (Lausanne II) was held in Manila 1989 and the results of the Congress were summarized in The Manila Manifesto.⁸³ In this Manifesto, 21 Affirmations of “faith and order” were elaborated,

⁸⁰ They affirm that “our belief in the one-eternal God, Creator and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who governs all things according to the purpose of his will”.
<http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>

⁸¹ “The Glen Eyrie Report on Muslim Evangelization,” in *Making Christ known*, 123.

⁸² <http://www.lausanne.org/issue-based-gatherings.html>

⁸³ Since 1966 the World Congress of Evangelism, there has a number of meetings and conferences,

one out of the 21 mentioned about other religions:⁸⁴

“We affirm that other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and that human spirituality, if unredeemed by Christ, leads not to God but to judgment, for Christ is the only way.”

Taking “Proclaim Christ until he comes” as the theme of Lausanne II, the Congress again aimed at conversion, but no longer forcefully rejected the idea of dialogue as mission and started to recognize the necessity of integrating the Gospel with social responsibilities. The world-wide church needs to seek and receive the confidence to partner with the Holy Spirit in its work of reaching Muslims.

Instead of imposing Christian values and church culture when facing Muslims, the Lausanne Movement in her 2004 forum suggests contextualization of gospel and implementation of five areas of action.⁸⁵ These encourage a more positive and contributive interaction between the people of two religions and the acceptance of each other has been nurtured.

They also invite Muslim converts and national church leaders to participate in workshops, discussions and planning session for further Muslim mission.⁸⁶ Keeping in mind that “faith doesn’t come at once but through stages”,⁸⁷ they encourage missionaries to go and minister among Muslims on a long-term basis, and also urge local pastors to take every opportunity to share testimonies of what God is doing to

nationally, regionally, or internationally, on different themes and topics almost once a year.
<http://www.lausanne.org/gatherings.html>

⁸⁴ The no.7 in the 21 Affirmations. “The Manila Manifesto: an elaboration of the Lausanne Covenant 15 years later,” in *Making Christ known*, 230-1.

⁸⁵ Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 49, UNDERSTANDING MUSLIMS,, 2004:
http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP49_IG20.pdf

⁸⁶ “The Glen Eyrie Report on Muslim Evangelization,” in *Making Christ known*, 124.

⁸⁷ There was a consultation on conversion and world evangelization in Hong Kong 1988 that states clear that “faith comes in stages”. Ibid, 224.

bring Muslims to faith in Christ.

2.3.5 Limitations

Country to country approach towards those unreached and least-reached people is somehow one of the aims of the Lausanne Movement.⁸⁸ It is in her statement that to have church growth as the indicator of “success”.⁸⁹ It would be for them a failure and “something got to be pondered and changed” if there is a halt in the growing of Church members. To move on mission to other places or to take other approaches instead when facing resistance (and even low receptivity) from Muslims is nonetheless an unspoken rule.⁹⁰

There is question over “Can Muslims who accept Jesus as Savior and Lord remain Muslim or must they join a new religion?”⁹¹ Neither a specific answer nor a clear statement has been given to this question by the Movement, however as for the belief of “Religion consists of affiliation with a group”, to admit one’s belief together with the action of joining the community is considered “a whole”.

2.4 Conclusion

Mission for Christians is long understood as spreading the Gospel and make people God’s disciples, but Uppsala meeting of WCC in 1968 somewhat re-conceptualized mission in view of the revolutionary situation of the world at large.⁹²

⁸⁸ Referring datas from Joshua Project (JP), World Christian Trends AD 30 – AD 2200 (WCT), Frontiers, etc. show her concerns over them.

⁸⁹ Lausanne Occasional Paper 13: Christian Witness to Muslims, 1980:
<http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/lop-13.html> (accessed 10th May 2010)

⁹⁰ “Resistance and Receptivity,” in Lausanne Occasional Paper 13: Christian Witness to Muslims.

⁹¹ John Travis, GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW, A Response to Joseph Cumming’s ‘Muslim Followers of Jesus?': <http://www.lausanne.org/global-conversation/god-is-doing-something-new.html>

⁹² The goal of mission to attain a just society is longing to be achieved. Jacob Thomas, *From Lausanne to Manila: evangelical social thought: models of mission and the social relevance of the Gospel* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 44.

On the other hand, being faithful to the Gospel and God's commandment, the Lausanne Movement clearly states the importance and unfailing duty for making converts. We thus see that WCC and Lausanne try to accomplish mission in two radically different directions.

Both WCC and the Lausanne Movement concentrate more or less on the ideological and theological levels of mission (though there are actions alongside with the discussions), a broadened overview is seen. However, when it comes to a specific local church or context, a rather contextualized missiology standing between these two approaches should be as well considered.

Chapter 3

A Case Study: The Love and Peace Society

3.1 Introduction

Mission as evangelism as one of the core functions of churches beside liturgy, diaconia, koinonia, etc. Or in short words: Mission and evangelism has always been one of the dimensions of church besides the church as worshipping community, as caring community and so on.

“To preach the Gospel and win the unreached people” has always been one of the main themes of churches and also the motto of some mission organizations.¹ Outreach programs, social services, local/overseas mission trips, annual evangelical meetings, street evangelical performances, prayer meetings etc. are thought to be means to attain this goal for ages.

There is no news for us to see Christians distributing pamphlets, singing hymns, performing dramas, sharing their belief or preaching on the streets of Hong Kong. However, since the 18th October 2009, the first Islamic Awareness Day has been proposed in Hong Kong, to propagate one’s religion publicly is no longer Christianity’s monopoly. Many Muslims have gone out in the streets to distribute books, DVD’s and even a brief informal survey on how Hong Kongees view Islam had been conducted.²

As the increasing acceptance and visibility, together with the widened dispersion of Muslim population caught the Christian world’s focus, more and more churches or

¹ Unreached people here mean those with other faiths or without any faith, not necessary limited to those who never heard of Jesus Christ as the former denotation.

² Serving Islam Team Hong Kong: <http://www.servingislamteam.com/>

Christian organizations in Hong Kong have started to plan and do mission towards them.³

In the past chapters, we have discussed the two leading different concepts of mission and how Christian organizations or churches work on to attain that. In order to find if there is any middle way between these two missiological approaches in a practical sense, in this chapter, I would like to work on a case study in Hong Kong.

The reason why I take the Love and Peace Society (LAPS) as my object is that, it is considered to be the first one which aims at mission towards Muslim residents in Hong Kong. LAPS in fact is working hard and taking mission towards Muslims as their priority, it is also a self-finance and non-denominational organization.

This case study based entirely on the information from interviews with Rev. H. S. Kamran, the chairperson of LAPS, and various informants from different other organizations, while publications of LAPS or related materials are rare.

3.2 Background Information

3.2.1 Muslim Population in Hong Kong

Ever since Hong Kong became a British colony, numerous Indians, Pakistani and Nepalese soldiers were brought to Hong Kong by the British government. Most of them settled here and never went back to their homeland until today. They are the ancestors of the South Asian population in Hong Kong. Most of these Indians and

³ There are lots of churches (Kowloon Ling Liang Church, Kwun Tong Mandarin Baptist Church, E.F.C.C. Tung Fook Church, North Point Alliance Church, St. John Cathedral, EFFC Yan Fook and Waterloo Hill Church, etc.), NGOs and Christian Organizations (Mission to New Arrivals Ltd., Jubilee Ministries: 4C ministry, Cross Cultural Care Church, etc.) which do mission exclusively for Indonesian Muslim maids.

Pakistanis are of Islamic background.

According to the yearbook 2008, there are some 220, 000 Muslims in Hong Kong.⁴ They include 30, 000 Chinese, 120,000 Indonesian, and the rest are mostly locally born non-Chinese or immigrants from Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Arabia and some other African countries.⁵ Among them, most of the Pakistan and India Muslims are residents who either work and settled for years or have been living for generations in Hong Kong.⁶ Comparing with the total number of 70, 000 in 2004, the populations of Muslim has been increased at an alarming rate.⁷ Muslims nowadays are more dispersed over traditionally non-Muslim countries and thus becoming more visible.

The growing number of migrant workers (floating population) gives rise to this. Indonesian maids and the converts of Filipino maids together with the immigration of many more Mainland Chinese Muslims into Hong Kong are the main contributions to this increasing number in the recent years.⁸

3.2.2 Islamic Centres and Muslim Organizations

As such a distinctive community of Muslims had formed since Hong Kong became a

⁴ Chapter 18, Religion and Custom in *The Yearbook of Hong Kong 2008*: <http://www.yearbook.gov.hk/2008/en/pdf/E18.pdf>, 365 (access 5th March, 2010).

⁵ Those locally born non-Chinese have been living in Hong Kong for several generations and most of them have acquired the local culture and dialect.

The Yearbook of Hong Kong 2006: http://www.yearbook.gov.hk/2006/en/18_07.htm (access 5th March, 2010)

⁶ As told above they have ancestors in Hong Kong traced back over 100 years.

⁷ *The Yearbook of Hong Kong 2004*: http://www.yearbook.gov.hk/2004/en/18_06.htm (access 5th March, 2010)

⁸ According to the 2006 by-Census conducted by the Government, there are around 5% ethnic minorities of the total population in Hong Kong (around 340, 000), where Filipinos constitute 32.9% and Indonesians 25.7%.

Hong Kong 2006 Population By-census Thematic Report: Ethnic Minorities, 5:

http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/statistical_report/population_and_vital_events/index_cd_B1120050_dt_latest.jsp (accessed 4th March, 2010).

See Wai-Yip, Ho, 'Embracing Islam: "Re-Conversion" of Filipino Domestic Workers from Christianity to Muslim Identity in Hong Kong', unpublished paper, Division of Social Science, School of Humanities and Social Science (The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology, 1998).

See also Sithi Hawwa, 'Religious Conversion of Filipino Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong', in *ISIM Newsletter* (April 1999), 10.

British colony, the government allocated land for them to build mosques and cemeteries.⁹ Different Muslim organizations and associations have been formed to cater to different needs. Some provide their counterparts with financial aid, others provide medical facilities or education assistance.

The most representative Muslim organization, the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, co-ordinates almost all of the local Muslim festivals and events.¹⁰ Apart from conducting religious festivals and activities, the Fund also manages and maintains five non-profit educational facilities.¹¹

There are at least 16 other registered Islamic organizations and associations in Hong Kong and four of them are particularly serving the Indians or Pakistanis in HK.¹² Five principal masjids (Muslim place of worship which means the house of God or house of prayer) are built and numbers of Islamic centres (of smaller scale and normally located on the second floor of residential/commercial buildings) are scattered around the districts for daily praying, gathering and Qu'ran teaching.

3.3 The Love And Peace Society (LAPS)¹³

3.3.1 The Starting Point

⁹ There are two Muslim cemeteries located in Happy Valley and Cape Collinson in Chai Wan. Wai-Yip, Ho, "Historical Analysis of Islamic Community Development in Hong Kong: Struggle for Recognition in the Post-colonial Era", in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2001)

¹⁰ It is a public charity which nominated by the Islamic Union of Hong Kong, the Pakistan Association, the Indian Muslim Association and the Dawoodi Bohra Association, *The Yearbook of Hong Kong 2006*: http://www.yearbook.gov.hk/2006/en/18_07.htm (accessed 5th March, 2010).

¹¹ They include one college, two primary schools and two kindergartens.

¹² They are Indian Muslim Association Ltd, Pakistan Association of H.K. Ltd., Pakistan Welfare Islamic Union of Hong Kong, and Pakistan Traders Association (HK) Ltd..

¹³ According to the interviews with the founder of the Love and Peace Society, Rev. H. S. Kamran and the Vice Chairperson, Minister Jacqueline Chan. Please find its website: LAPS official website: <http://www.loveandpeacesociety.org/webnews/> (access 5th March, 2010)

It was not initially the intention of Rev. H. S. Kamran, the founder of the Love and Peace Society to establish such a missionary organization in Hong Kong to do mission work among the Muslims. When Rev. Kamran first came to Hong Kong in August 1995, he merely paid a visit to his Muslim friends before he took up the service at the Islamic community in the United Kingdom.¹⁴

During the short period in Hong Kong, Rev. Kamran visited a few Mosques and met over thousands Muslims from different countries. Amazed by the large numbers, he started to research about local Christian churches and organizations with specific mission towards Muslims. To his surprise, he found none. Being a Pakistani Baptist Missionary and a member of the Korean Missionary Department Overseas, he felt it was God's calling for him to serve this specific group of "seemingly uncared" people in Hong Kong.¹⁵

He then decided to pay a visit to the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong to see if they are interested in doing mission towards Muslims.¹⁶ Feeling the passionate heart of Rev. Kamran and witnessing the urgency of mission work towards Muslims in Hong Kong, the Vice Chairman (now the Chairman) of the Convention, Pastor Peter Tsui, encouraged and supported Rev. Kamran to develop such a ministry.¹⁷

Rev. Kamran and his whole family settled in Hong Kong in May 1996 and it was the Convention who helped for the processing of his working visa and their stay.

¹⁴ By the time, Rev. Kamran was a missionary for a Korean Missionary Department who was sent to the United Kingdom to serve the Pakistanis there. Before he started the service, he decided to stop at Hong Kong for a short visit.

¹⁵ Above 90% Pakistanis (includes women and children) who live in Hong Kong are Muslims. *Xianggang nan Ya yi gai kuang*, Lai Renbiao ed. (Xianggang: Ming ai Jiulong she qu zhong xin, 2006), 5.

¹⁶ Being a Baptist, he finds the connection with the Convention.

¹⁷ Pastor Peter Tsui is now also the Director of the Love and Peace Society.

The official website of the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong:

<http://www.hkbaptist.org.hk/acms/content.asp?site=bchk&op=showbycode&code=About-Director> (accessed 16th March, 2010).

At the beginning, Rev. Kamran worked with Pastor Tsui through the Global Mission Department of the Convention to form “Indo-Pak”.¹⁸ Because the name was rather explicitly pointing towards the goal of mission to the Indo, the Indians, and the Pak, the Pakistani, they changed it into “Jihad of the Heart”. Jihad is an Arabic word originally means “holy war” and “the legal, compulsory, communal effort to expand the territories ruled by Muslims at the expense of territories ruled by non-Muslims”. However, the Love and Peace Society took the meaning “struggles against evil” out of it. This upset some of the Muslims as it seems a blasphemy towards their religion. Eventually, they changed it again into “the Love and Peace Society” (LAPS) for it is a more non-religious biased appellation and it is nowadays located in Central.

3.3.2 Mission Statement and Missiological Approach

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-1)

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:19-20)

Taking together the Greatest Commandment and the Great Commission as their mission statement, Rev. Kamran feels the calling and urgent need to love these very close Islamic neighbors within the Hong Kong community, in an appropriate Christian way.

¹⁸ It denotes the organization’s main concern for Indians (Indo) and Pakistanis (Pak). Since Kamran himself is a Pakistani, he has passion to serve his own people and most of all, these two ethnic groups take up a significant percentage of locally born ethnic minority’s population (Pakistanis 37.6%, Indians 23.1%). According to *the Hong Kong 2006 Population By-census Thematic Report: Ethnic Minorities*, 34.

It is true that for Rev. Kamran the prime duty for this ministry is to make and multiply disciples of Jesus Christ. However, being born in a Muslim family, he experienced and actually understood quite well the repulsive force Muslims would have towards Christianity and the difficulties one would face across this path. That is why the name of “Love and Peace Society” came into his mind for it is more inclusive, welcoming and international connotation.

Rev Kamran states that their mission approach is Friendship Evangelism; all they intend to do is the Ministry of Seed Sowing and become Muslims’ dependable neighbors.

3.3.2.1 Friendship Evangelism¹⁹

“Εὐ’αγγέλιον”, the Greek root of the word Gospel had never been used referring to a book but always to a communicated message.²⁰ It is more than simply conveying a message in written or verbal form but should be understood as a form of communication.

No one would argue that to start mission within one’s social circle is the best way to share Christ and bring work colleagues, family members and friends to Christ. For “once trust is established, the natural progression of friendship conversation often turns to faith.”²¹ It is without doubt that “The best evangelism takes place in a context of mutual trust and respect,” that is between friends.²²

¹⁹ There are in fact some countries, for instance in China, Christians take this missiological approach toward the Muslims, due to political reasons. However in Hong Kong, as a city without religious constraint (to have full religious freedom),

²⁰ John H. Dobson, *Learn New Testament Greek*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 65.

²¹ “Friendship Evangelism”: <http://www.creativeministry.org/article.php?id=26> (accessed 18th March, 2010).

²² “Friendship Evangelism!”: http://www.mindspring.com/~mamcgee/grace_friendship.html (accessed 18th March, 2010).

The core notion of Friendship Evangelism is then to make friends and develop rapport with Muslims (in this case); through these personal and day-to-day contacts the Gospel is communicated.

Rev. Kamran thinks it is important to spend quality time with them and to be sensitive to their daily needs. Muslims in Hong Kong are from different social background and they may come across different kinds of difficulties: “Unless they trust you, no one would really talk to you and accept your presence, help or idea,” emphasized Rev. Kamran. In fact, even if one might want to help, there might be no one who wanted to take the offer.

With this in mind, from the very beginning of the mission, Rev Kamran started off visiting Indians and Pakistanis door after door and day by day. There was no holiday but greetings and the passion towards them. His Islamic friends started to regard him as “brother” after getting familiar with him. “So we are not just making friends but become brothers to them”, who is not forceful imposing one’s own belief but to share, listen and be there for them.

3.3.2.2 Ministry of Seed Sowing

Unlike some churches counting on numbers of harvest, what is most important for Rev. Kamran and his team in LAPS is to sow the seeds of love and care of God to their fellow Muslim brothers and sisters.

“Seed sowing evangelism” is not based on the Parable of the Sower that emphasizes how one’s quality (the nature of one’s heart) affects his/her harvest, but rather, they believe they are merely the sowers of the seeds of the Gospel and the harvest is not depends on the target but it is God’s decision when and how it ripens through the work

of the Holy Spirit. They keep three rules of Mission in mind: to love, to pray and be humble.²³ “We are in no hurry to see them become Christians because we believe it will be sooner or later,” exclaimed the Minister Jacqueline Chan, the one and only full time Hong Konger who works for the organization.

For Rev. Kamran, the ministry of Seed Sowing requires a lot of time and as mentioned, they are not counting on the numbers of converts or baptized. But then as farmers, they still care the cultivation, it is why they established the first Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi Church, the Church of Love and Peace in November 1996 for those who want to develop and refine their faith in Christianity.

3.3.2.3 Conviction rather than Conversion

The traumatized relationship between the two religious groups alongside the human history somewhat hinders further development between them.²⁴ Muslims’ presupposition of “Christian’s coming over to confront and convert us” is nonetheless an obvious fact. It is therefore the motto of Rev. Kamran and his colleagues not to condemn their belief but to help them through their problems, socialize and befriend them, by the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

Since Muslims enjoy sharing their belief as much as Christians do, by patiently listening to their Islamic proclamation rather than condemning their counterparts’ faith, the Muslims become ready to open up. Once rapport has developed, they would “invariably respond by becoming more inclined to enter into serious discussion rather than sheer debate and argument”.²⁵ It is what interfaith dialogue really means to and

²³ “Introduction of local Cross-cultural Mission,” in *Hong Kong Baptist Mission Newsletter* (June, 2007), 2.

²⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 1.

²⁵ The goal of mission is to obtain a real conversation and a mutual understanding rather than mere religious confrontation. John Gilchrist, *Facing the Muslim Challenge: a Handbook of Christian-Muslim*

works out for them.

To aim at conviction rather than simply conversion is what LAPS emphasizes. Conviction of realizing one's primal connection with Jesus Christ, or in other words: conviction that Jesus Christ is more than a prophet and can also liberate them from the bondage of sin is for them the first step. The next step, conversion is not their ultimate concern.²⁶

“Our main purpose is to share with them but not to convert them because we believe through conviction people come to Christ. It is very important for one to convict him/herself as a sinner.” Rev. Kamran stated.

Believing “we do the best, God and the Holy Spirit would do the rest”, it is for them to leave all the negative feeling of being rejected behind and keep moving forward.

3.3.3 Praxis

Instead of navel-gazing, the Love and Peace Society reaches out most of the time to their fellows through different means.

Since their target groups are primarily Indians and Pakistani Muslims (both immigrants and locally born),²⁷ they go mainly to districts where they live, gather and worship to associate and live with them. Regular and irregular out-reach programs have been gradually scheduled.

Apologetics, online version (2002), 8.

<http://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Challenge/intro.html> (accessed 18th March, 2010).

²⁶ “Conviction is mental assent and conversion is to be taken by divine intervention”, <http://truthsoughtandfound.wordpress.com/2007/09/26/conviction-or-conversion/> (accessed 22nd March, 2010)

²⁷ Their mission is not limited to only Indians and Pakistanis, merely prioritized. Since their other vision is “to build a peaceful society in Hong Kong and in the world”, they concern also the locals and other ethnic minorities.

Ministry of Hospitality: Table Fellowship

Understanding eating as one of the most essential, unavoidable but not necessarily compromising daily need, LAPS started to offer various kinds of Table Fellowship from the very beginning of their service. It is their way of showing God's love and concern to human's primary need.

From the 2006 by-Census Report, we learn that the educational attainments of most Pakistanis are lower than average; around one-third of the population take up elementary occupations and almost half of their monthly income (from the main employment) is between 4000-9999.²⁸ Free lunch and dinner meeting would then become quite a "gimmick" and an attraction for them to, at least come and eat.

They regularly offer free Halal lunch on Sundays before Urdu/Hindi Worship, Saturdays after International/English Worship, and serving dinner on Tuesdays after Bible study.²⁹ They also serve meals almost every day for those who are jobless or the Asylum seekers. Although it might be discouraging to see people come, eat and leave without staying in for further communication, for Minister Jacqueline and Rev. Kamran, it is a stepping stone on relationship building.

Mosque Visitation and Church Invitation

The best and most direct way in bridging up with Muslims leaders and their followers

²⁸ Although the number is rising, but still under 20% of the overall Pakistanis population who could attain post secondary education/training. *2006 by-Census Report*, 45, 66, 77.

²⁹ Halal means lawful or legal and Halal foods are food that are allowed under Islamic dietary guidelines. For instance, animals should be slaughtered in the name of Allah before one eats. Saad Fayed, "Halal Food: What is Hala Food?" in About.com Guide: <http://mideastfood.about.com/od/middleeasternfood101/a/halalfoods.htm> (accessed 18th March, 2010)

is to visit their temples. The organization once had regular visitations to the Kowloon Mosque on Saturdays but since the foundation had been built up, they shifted to visit these Mosques, Islamic Centers and even homes on a more private and casual based. This is for them to get more Muslim acquaintances from different social backgrounds and ethnicities.

After the Islamic month of fasting (Ramadan), the Festival of Breaking the Fast (Eid ul Fitr) follows. The members of the LAPS would join this Islamic celebration with their Muslims friends and enjoy the feast together. Correspondingly when Christmas comes, they would invite their Muslim friends to come for Christmas party.

This kind of mutual visitation reinforced friendship and understanding between the two religious parties, and created a more harmonic atmosphere.

Inter-faith forum

One of the most important tasks of the Love and Peace Society is to bring healing and reconciliation through discussion and understanding.³⁰ In order to pursue this, besides visitations they also join hand with other organizations to facilitate seminars, forums and workshops between the two religions.³¹

There was an interfaith dialogue on the topic “Understanding Islam and Christianity” LAPS cooperated with the Serving Islam Team (SIT)³² in April 2010. Altogether around 25 participants from both Islamic and Christianity backgrounds of different ethnicity joined the forum.³³ The founder of SIT, Brother Wael Ibrahim, started by

³⁰ *God is Love Magazine*, Volume 1, Issue 1, (22nd January, 2010), 2.

³¹ Details to be found below: 3.3.3 Partnerships *International Human Rights Forum (IHRF)*.

³² Serving Islam Team Hong Kong: <http://www.servingislamteam.com/>

³³ There were Indonesian, Pilipino, African, English Muslims and also Korean, Chinese and Pakistani Christians.

explaining what Islamic faith is and then gave us a brief introduction of how Jesus Christ related to them. It is then for Pastor Kamran to share what Christianity is about. Each section was followed by Q & A and participants are welcomed to raise question and clarify doubts.

*Love and Peace Prison Ministry*³⁴

Minister Victor Joseph took up prison ministry several years ago and has regularly visited inmates in prisons and the detention centre. He holds Bible studies for prisoners not only from Pakistan but also from other ethnic backgrounds. There are altogether over 12 people baptized and some of them had been already repatriated to their own countries.³⁵

“Unlike their other Indian or Pakistani friends, who have their own social, religious network in the community,” said Minister Victor, “they are all alone here and they need someone to care emotionally and spiritually.” It is considered the only ministry where LAPS would “preach” deliberately.

3.3.4 Partnerships

*Hong Kong Baptist Mission*³⁶

LAPS receives regular financial support from the Hong Kong Baptist Mission. Besides,

³⁴ Prison ministry here refers less to group fellowship than to the ministry of individual visitation.

³⁵ Up to 2007, there are 6 Muslims from Pakistan and Bangladesh, three Hindus from India and three Buddhists from Sri Lanka were baptized and in the pass April (2010), 4 more inmates in Tung Tau Correctional Institute were baptized. Interview with Minister Victor Joseph of LAPS.

³⁶ According to the Minister of Education and Promotion Titus Cheung, from the Hong Kong Baptist Mission, it was because of Rev. Kamran’s Muslim mission that the Convent established this Hong Kong Baptist Mission in 2004.

The official website of Hong Kong Baptist Mission:

http://www.hkbm.org/Common/Reader/Channel/ShowPage.jsp?Cid=2&Pid=3&Version=0&Charset=big5_hkscs&page=0 (accessed 18th March, 2010).

the Baptist Mission also organizes cross-cultural mission trips introducing the work of LAPS to other overseas churches.³⁷ However, the local Baptist member churches are seldom involved in this mission. “In the past, the International Baptist Church (Hong Kong) would help to take care of the Pakistani Christians but not anymore,” said Mr. Titus Cheung, the Minister of Education and Promotion from the Hong Kong Baptist Mission. He added, “Sadly, among the Chinese churches, there is no partnership like us to support (financially) and join hand with them.”

Even though LAPS has a rather close relationship with the Hong Kong Baptist Mission and the International Baptist church and regularly receives financial support from them, Rev. Kamran stresses that LAPS is a non-denominational organization. He believes that for LAPS’ approaches and the way it associates with their Muslims friends, it is better not to cling to any one of the denominations.

*Xin Sheng Resource Centre*³⁸

Out of concern for the local Muslims, Xin Sheng Resource Centre was established in 2004 to promote and assist local churches to do mission towards Muslims. In the beginning, Rev. Kamran was invited to train staff and helpers.

Although Xin Sheng no longer conducts training courses for their staff and helpers on specific techniques regarding mission towards Muslims, the two organizations still occasionally team up informally. “Since we have different mission approaches, we seldom join in each other’s activities,” remarks Mr. Yeung, a Xin Sheng officer, “but in

³⁷ “Sharing on a local cross-cultural mission trip,” in *Hong Kong Baptist Mission Newsletter*, (October, 2009):

http://www.hkbm.org/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=707&Pid=10&Version=39&Cid=25&Charset=big5_hkscs (accessed 16th March, 2010).

³⁸ It is a local organization which promotes, mobilizes and assists local churches to do mission towards Muslims, mostly Indonesians, according to Mr. Yeung, for it is rather difficult for them to reach out to the other South Asian Muslims. Phone interview with Mr. Yeung on 15th March, 2010, Hong Kong. The official website of Xin Sheng Resource Centre: <http://www.xsrc.org/> (accessed 8th March, 2010).

the same way as Rev. Kamran and his coworkers would come and ask for our prayers or enquire about information of local social services, so we would vice versa go and ask for their opinions.”

International Human Rights Forum (IHRF)

Joining hand with the International Human Rights Forum, the Love and Peace Society started to widen their concern towards promoting racial harmony and to arouse awareness among the ethnic minorities regarding their human rights issues arising in Hong Kong.

The members of the forum include other religious leaders and university scholars. Besides the cross-cultural and religious celebrations of Eid ul Fitr, Diwali and Christmas for people with different faith every year,³⁹ they also co-organize multicultural friendly parade (2004) and seminar on construction workers registration (2004).⁴⁰ It is their aim to work not only on policy and advocacy level, but also on grass root level. Regarding the relationship between Muslims and Christians, seminars on “Concepts of God: Muslim and Christian Point of Views” (2006) and monthly dinner fellowship (Muslim Christian’s fellowship) had as well been held.

The EM Community

In order to promote the notion of “Unity in Diversity”⁴¹ and raise fund for their

³⁹ Diwali is a national festival (as the Chinese New Year) for both Indians and Nepalese.

⁴⁰ *God is Love Magazine*, 3.

⁴¹ Regarding to the subsidiary mission the Love and Peace Society, it is for them “to work towards integration of minority communities into Hong Kong society forming a bridge between Chinese and non-Chinese residents and to promote ethnic, religious, social and cultural harmony in Hong Kong”.

See the official website (under construction) of the Love and Peace Media:

<http://www.loveandpeacemedia.com/> (accessed 10th March, 2010).

missions,⁴² LAPS starts the publication of a monthly magazine, the EM (Ethnic Minorities) Family Magazine in January 2010. They try to invite and summon other religious and social organizations to advertise on their magazine for propagation or news sharing.

There are so far two organizations, the Asian Baptist Women's Fellowship and the Worship Music Society published their news on the magazine, but partnerships with different religious and ethnic background are to be expected and developed through this connection.⁴³

3.4 Theological Evaluation

When reflecting on missionary motives alongside the Christian history, David Bosch generalizes them into four:⁴⁴

- 1) Conversion: narrowing down the reign of God spiritualistically and individualistically by emphasizing the values of personal decision and commitment
- 2) Eschatological motive: focusing on the future but not interested in the exigencies of this life

⁴² The Hong Kong Baptist Mission is so far the only sponsor which supports the organization regularly. However, the mission works they are doing necessitate funding more than this.

⁴³ We could find details about the Asian Baptist Women's Fellowship in <http://www.abwfhk.org/abwfhk/about.php> and the Worship Music Society in <http://www.worshipmusicsociety.org/>.

⁴⁴ The Christian history here refers to the Western one. David J. Bosch, *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 5.

C.f. SEDOS's finding: SEDOS convened a seminar in 1991 over the title Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millennium, and two forms of Christian proclamation had been identified: firstly, a centripetal purpose which concerned with leading people into the church and make conversion; secondly, a more centrifugal purpose which furthers the values of the Kingdom through dialogue, inculturation and the concern of liberation (SEDOS, Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission, is a study and documentation center at the service of 72 Catholic missionary societies. See the official website of SEDOS: <http://www.sedosmission.org/site/>)

"Authentic Dialogue," in *Classic texts in mission and world Christianity*, Norman E. Thomas ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 280.

- 3) Church planting: identifying the church with the kingdom of God and stressing the need for the gathering of a community
- 4) Philanthropic: equating God's reign with an improved society and merely challenging to seek justice in this world

He admits that their manifestations are often ambiguous and that they therefore lead to unsatisfactory missionary practice.⁴⁵ By taking a look at the mission of LAPS and analyzing who their partners are, we could deduce their motive and find it rather pure and unconditional: sharing the love of Christ and having fellowship, following the example of the Good Samaritan emphasizing the neighborly care; missionary practice is comparatively satisfactory.

As seen before in Chapter 2, mission can be understood in a spectrum of different paradigms, from conversion-oriented evangelism to a broader engagement understood as mission. What LAPS doing is somehow challenging the tradition, maybe even the contemporary churches' value of spreading the Gospel and church growth.

3.4.1 Mission as "Who They Are"

Turning over the traditional terminology of "mission" and leading it to a more contemporary way, it seems for LAPS that mission is a mode of life or a set of living principle rather than merely a task to be accomplished. Rev. Kamran and his coworkers know "who they are", as the mediator or love agent to share the life of Jesus Christ and at the same time, they know as well "who they are", their Muslim counterparts as individuals to love and care for. One's being and identity is valued rather than the mission itself.

⁴⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming mission*, 5.

In terms of interpreting the Bible (for instance the Great Commandment), not only do they take it literally and present the Gospel verbally, they also put it into practice by sharing others' everyday life.

While many contemporary organizations or churches try to fulfill their motives through providing social services (philanthropic) or bringing them into churches (conversion and church planting), LAPS simply takes mission and salvation as togetherness as well as humanization.

Church mission often tends to depersonalize others by subconsciously taking them as unreached entities and “targets” for evangelism.⁴⁶ The concern is simply whether the evangelistic targets are converted and keep going to church, however hardly concerned about their living situations.

In contrast, missionary organizations might, to a certain extent meet their needs and be social advocats or supporters, yet they are still rather task oriented.⁴⁷ The concern goes to social justice, racial harmony and educational/career adaptation, but may imply a condescending relationship.

LAPS is not only providing social service or incorporating them into churches, but serving both their physical and spiritual lives through personal bonds.

In order to “keep tracks” of their Muslim counterparts and be there to help, Rev.

⁴⁶ Samuel Escobar, *The new global mission: the Gospel from everywhere to everyone* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 2003), 156

⁴⁷ One might argues here with the notion of Social Gospel, but what I am emphasizing is mission towards Muslims as a whole and yet as an individual.

Kamran and his co-workers keep paying home visits as their primary duty. When some are interested in Christian faith or simply want to know more, they establish a church for them using their languages rather than ask them to fit in the congregation, but to live with them and let them experience and discover Christ themselves.

Even today, depreciation of other faiths by Christians is still deeply entrenched. At best, other religions or religious practice are judged to be “broken lights”; at worse, they are even crowned as the deceptions of the devil.⁴⁸ However, Rev. Kamran and his coworkers sometimes join their worship and daily prayers, simply as a way of showing respect. Solidarity is then attained, for they are not there to propose differences but to search for common grounds and mutual understanding.

One might argue with Peter Beyerhaus that “to focusing on worldly life is a radical shift of the centre from God to man, and accordingly the replacement of Theology by Anthropology.”⁴⁹ Without doubt LAPS wants to “make disciples”, but it seems to them salvation should be more humane with a breadth of mind, not confine to the salvation of soul but also earthly relationship with others.

Liberative Power of the Gospel

Acting as mediator and love agent, conversion becomes less provocative. Of course, conversion always remains provocative, but Muslims joining the fellowship of LAPS may gradually and over a long period of time, lose their distrust and get to know their Christian brothers as genuinely caring. Gospel as good news should not be forceful but on the other hand generate liberative power after all.⁵⁰ Knowing his Muslim

⁴⁸ J.N. Farquhar, “Christ, the Fulfillment of Religions,” in *Classic texts in mission and world Christianity*, Norman E. Thomas ed., 263.

⁴⁹ M. M. Thomas, *Salvation and humanisation: some crucial issues of the theology mission in contemporary India* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1971), 6.

⁵⁰ For God and Jesus is Himself a liberator.

counterparts' repulsive force towards Christian organizations' imposing reputation, Rev. Kamran took years to change the image and develop a relationship with Muslim leaders by living out Christ through deeds rather than through words.

To “snatch the sheeps” from the Mosque is not LAPS' vision but it is for them to introduce Jesus Christ. Gospel and the title of Christianity should not be a binding force on communicating with others, or else it would become merely a limiting power.

Both conviction and conversion are not an easy decision for Muslims to make, one might face social rejection from his/her own family/community or even political prosecution when convicting his/her sins before Christ, not to mention conversion to Christian faith. LAPS however will not insist on one to take part in church meeting or being a member of church but instead, they invite them to join in their community. For relationship with God is an ongoing and becoming process, about life consistency and persistence.

3.4.2 The Mid-Way

As Pakistani and with a deep understanding of the social and cultural aspects of their Muslim counterparts' lives, Rev. Kamran and his coworkers understand well how costly a conversion to Christ would be. It is, as Raymond Fung proposes, “For one to put at risk his/her essential parts (familial, social and yet political) and yet his/her own very identity, more than merely religious ideologies, a rather profound dialogue in which a close personal, family and community ties should forged.”⁵¹

Unlike WCC which encourages interfaith dialogue but avoids touching directly to their religious standpoint, or the Lausanne Covenant which upholds Christianity as the only

⁵¹ Raymond Fung, *Evangelistically yours: ecumenical letters on contemporary evangelism* (Geneva: WCC, 1992), 89.

ultimate truth, LAPS seems to integrate the two and to take a middle-way: taking up interfaith dialogue and not merely talking, but as well doing the Gospel; not aiming at merely mutual understanding or even conversion, but at evoking self-discovery and conviction. LAPS neither dishonored the Islamic faith nor do they put their basic Christian faith principles aside to merely engage in dialogue.

While both WCC and the Lausanne Covenant suggest mission in a broader, theoretical and somewhat detached sense,⁵² Friendship Evangelism which the LAPS takes is rather personal.⁵³

After being a missionary in Muslim nations for over 30 years, Dr. Phil Parshall remarks, “The influence of a close friend can be very significant. Peer pressure is a powerful stimulant to change. Frequently friendship is the first step toward winning someone to Christ. The Muslim becomes attracted to Christianity through the life and witness of a person who is willing to take the time and effort to cultivate friendships.”⁵⁴

Beginning with the recognition of one’s cultural, social and religious identity, LAPS befriends (and makes friends) with the Muslims and deals directly with their daily problems as a starting point. Only after such rapport is attained, would they start to be open enough to get involved in sincere inter-faith dialogue or forum.

⁵² Ever since the WCC adopted Inter-faith Dialogue guidelines for the ecumenical movement in 1971, there are meetings almost every year for the “Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies” (DFI) to invite leaders, scholars from other religions to come. The programs and forum from both international organizations are more or less included mainly “intellectuals” (sent representatives), seems a broken link with the local context. No wonder churches are still self-contented.

⁵³ John Gilchrist, *The Christian Witness to the Muslim*, online version: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Vol2/2a.html> (accessed 18th March, 2010).

⁵⁴ Dr. Phil Parshall, *The Fortress and the Fire*, 104, cited in John Gilchrist, *The Christian Witness to the Muslim*, online version: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Vol2/2a.html>

Targeting Pakistani and Indian Muslims, LAPS finds it still difficult to find local partnerships.⁵⁵ Many local churches or Christian organizations are prejudiced against these people groups, or due to their own uncertainty, they might feel threatened by the encounter with Muslims from South Asia or even demonize Muslims as adherents of the realm of Satan.

3.4.3 Acceptance and Receptivity of Muslims

LAPS is oriented towards friendship evangelism, the whole thing seems very much depended on the actual person establishing friendship. It is then important for us to review how their Muslim counterparts (non-direct ones) see them and their degree of acceptance and receptivity.⁵⁶

In order to get a closer look on that, I have interviewed three Muslims from different backgrounds: Tariq, a Pakistani who works for NGOs in Hong Kong for over 15 years; Wael, an Egyptian, the founder of the Serving Islam Team who has been living in Hong Kong for 9 years; Medina, a Filipino who has embraced Islam and stayed in Hong Kong for over 20 years,⁵⁷ and three questions regarding LAPS had been asked:

1) How do you Know LAPS?

Tariq firstly met Pastor Kamran four years ago (2006) when the IHRF joined hand with

⁵⁵ Pakistani and Indian once took up the greatest amount of Muslims (among the minorities) in Hong Kong. But then ever since the flush of Indonesian domestic workers and the increasing number of Filipino converts (due to marital reasons), they then outnumbered their Pakistani and Indian counterparts and started to draw the local churches' attention.

See Sithi Hawwa, "From Cross to Crescent: religious conversion of Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong," in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Vol. 11, No. 3, (2000)*, 2.

⁵⁶ It is important to take a look at how, especially those non-direct Muslim counterparts see LAPS to verify if LAPS mission approach a validate and approachable one. Below, I have conducted telephone and email interviews with three Muslims.

⁵⁷ Both Wael and Medina have mission in life to convey and spread the messages of Islam to the other people.

Official Website of the Serving Islam Team which introduced both Medina and Wael:

http://www.servingislamteam.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20:about-us&catid=35:activities&Itemid=28 (accessed 14th May 2010)

LAPS to promote racial harmony in Hong Kong. He was by the time a volunteer of the IHRF.

Wael was introduced to Pastor Kamran through a personal contact, and upon Pastor Kamran's invitation, Wael agreed on cooperating an interfaith dialogue at the LAPS.⁵⁸

It is for Medina that not until Wael asked her to join the interfaith dialogue she would have not known LAPS.

2) How do you see LAPS? What Impression LAPS Give you?

Despite their different in religious orientation, Wael views LAPS as normal human beings who are sincere and serious about their faith. The first impression LAPS gives him is really good, people of LAPS are friendly and welcoming. He hopes to maintain this healthy relationship for years to come.

Medina sees LAPS as an organized society of ethnic minorities and local Chinese. She can see some of them very accommodate, friendly and are understanding and tolerant on other people's belief. She regards them as friends, brothers and sisters regardless of their religious differences.

3) What kind of Relationships you think LAPS has with Muslims?

Tariq somewhat appreciates what LAPS does like caring for Muslims' daily lives through table fellowships and home visitation. However, he has seen some people simply used LAPS platform to take advantages and he worries that would not be a healthy relationship. Personally he thinks LAPS is on the good threshold but then wonders those who join her activities and gatherings are of different orientations. He yet doubts "the converts" converted out of their needs rather than due to their belief.

⁵⁸ The interfaith dialogue on topic "Understanding Islam and Christianity" held on 24th April, 2010.

Instead of focusing on individual attitude of Muslim towards LAPS, Wael concerns more about ideology. Since there are many misconceptions that Christians may have towards Islam and Muslims (and vice versa),⁵⁹ so it is for him really important for Muslims and Christians come together to clarify through dialogues. As LAPS has such an openness to invite Muslims to gather at her place for mutual understanding, he thinks the relationship between them is “starting” good and has been built upon respect from both sides.

Medina thinks LAPS has a very healthy relationship with Muslims, she finds LAPS working hard on getting acquaintance to Muslims, “There are some I have met there (in LAPS) who went to the mosque before to visit us.” Moreover, in the LAPS news letter, it includes also articles contributed by Muslims.

Medina thinks the main objective of this relationship is, to exist together in a society harmoniously, regardless of religion, race, gender and other considerable factors. We have differences but as humans we have to overcome these differences peacefully, with open-mindedness, tolerance, courage, and brotherly love for the sake of One God that we all believe in.

Although only three Muslims were interviewed, the sampling size is rather (and in fact extremely) small, but then at least a glimpse of how the intentional receivers feel towards LAPS could be observed. The acceptance and receptivity of Muslims is not bad if there is chance for them to get along with people from LAPS. Nothing as a pushy or condescendence feeling emitted rather a friendly platform created that both

⁵⁹ It is for Wael that some of the Christians understand them while some are still a bit discriminatory to them.

religious people are willing to speak up openly about what they believe.

3.5 Conclusion

Mission has its origin neither in the official church nor in any special groups within the church, it should be originated in the missionary God.⁶⁰ If we trace back the encounter of Christianity with other faiths, we could see it is as old as Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman.⁶¹ There is then no sharp turning point or one click to go, but is about to live the life and the awareness and readiness to share the living gospel.

The case study on LAPS shows us that mission towards Muslims is an ongoing process rather than a one-off program and should not be viewed as a task to accomplish (a convert to make or a service to offer) but a way and mode of life.⁶²

It is of course not easy to conclude what would be the best missiological approach on mission towards Muslims while there are lots more to be concerned (for instance political issues, or religious fundamentalism), but a new light has been shed by LAPS that there could be more personal oriented, lively and still evangelistic approach.

Mission as Salvation is a process that not only refers to those "non-believers" but also to Christians. As David Bosch says, "The definition of mission is a continual process of sifting, testing, reformulating and discarding."⁶³ Not only the mode, but also the approach of mission should be subjected to change to fit in one's need and the local context: to shift from one paradigm to the other according to the contemporary social,

⁶⁰ David J. Bosch, *Witness to the world: the Christian mission in theological perspective* (London: Marshall, 1980), 239.

⁶¹ "Mission as Interfaith Witness," in *Classic texts in mission and world Christianity*, Norman E. Thomas ed., 262.

⁶² For if it is regarding to social services, the Muslims organizations are themselves promoting and getting it pretty well.

⁶³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 511.

cultural, political, religious and yet personal situations.

Mission in another Sense

4.1 Corresponding Theology

With a traumatic history of the two religions, it is not surprising that they can hardly toward each other and evangelizing. The two approaches by Wesley and the 14th century Covenant mentioned in the previous chapter seem to go in two different ways. The Love and Peace Society tries to work in promoting gospel in a more welcoming, appropriated, practical and long lasting way.

Talking about mission towards Muslims, Joseph Carraro says that, "Islam for us is now necessarily the greatest challenge facing Christianity today. But rather than Christians choose to respond to them."¹ There seems to be a general expectation that we should be talking about "Christian response" rather than "response" to Islam.² This means for us that it is not simply about mission to the Muslim but more about the necessity of mission towards Christians themselves.

4.1.1 Handbook of Theology of Religions

It is not until 30 years ago that the world of religion and the world of mission began to change and new shape.

The theology of religions that started the possibility of mission for people of other religions. The hypothetical assumption is whether there "is" a way already in the world that

¹John, N. Carraro, "Christian response to Islam: A study in the mission of the church," <http://www.missionary.org.uk/missionary/missionary.htm>, 1994-1995.

Chapter 4

Mission in another Sense

4.1 Corresponding Theology

With a traumatic history of the two religions, it is not surprising that they are hostile toward each other and competing. The two approaches by WCC and the Lausanne Covenant mentioned in the previous chapter seem to go to two extremes while the Love and Peace Society tries to work on promoting gospel in a more welcoming, appropriated, practical and long lasting way.

Talking about mission towards Muslims, Joseph Cummings suggests that, “Islam *per se* is not necessarily the greatest challenge facing Christians today, but rather how Christians choose to respond to them.”¹ There seems to be a general consensus that we should be talking about “Christian responses” rather than “response” to Islam.² This means for me that it is not simply about mission to the Muslims but as much about the necessity of mission towards Christians themselves.

4.1.1 Deadlock of Theology of Religions

It is not until 30 some years ago that the discussion and discourse of theology of religions came into shape.

The theology of religions asks about the possibility of salvation for people of different religions. The hypothetical assumption is whether there “is” a way to salvation outside

¹ John Azumah, “Christian Response to Islam: A Struggle for the Soul of Christianity,” <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles.php/1256/03-2010>

² John Azumah.

Christianity (Jesus Christ). The question of salvation is the main concern of the majority of Christians towards people of other faith and yet these ideologies towards other religions somehow lead and guide us on how we process and work out mission.

According to Paul Knitter, there are four modes of theology religions: the replacement mode (exclusivism: exclusivists as Karl Barth), the fulfillment mode (inclusivism: inclusivists as Karl Rahner), the mutuality mode (pluralism: pluralists like John Hick, Paul Knitter) and the acceptance mode (theologian such as S. Mark Heim).³ Each one of these typologies gives rise to a certain idea over salvation and truth but it is rather a “from above” and “outsider” theology than the one from within.⁴ The lacking of openness and objectiveness is observed.

The theology of religions is theologizing without real understanding of what traditions the other faiths have but rather taking stances on “how Christians should see (but not relate) other religions”. So basically it seems that “the necessity of converting and confronting” (the exclusivist and the inclusivist) and “the unnecessary approach of conversion” (the pluralist and the acceptance mode) are the only approaches we could obtain. Holding up this theology, it might be why WCC and the Lausanne Covenant have such distinct approaches. However, it is but merely the reflection without real contact and encounter which somehow deadlocks our mission towards people of other faiths.

³ Giving a brief summary on the four modes: the replacement mode suggests Christianity and other religions are in an absolute confronting position while Christianity is the only true religion that could lead to salvation; the fulfillment mode affirms the value of other religions but they serve at the same time as the one preparing the way for Christianity; the mutuality mode believes “all roads lead to Roma”, that we all know parts of the truth; the acceptance mode takes stance and believes there is more than a single salvation but many, and each one of us in their own religions are climbing up different mountains.

See Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Christian theology of religions: a systematic reflection on the Christian understanding of world religions* (Bern: P. Lang, 1998), 44-8, Paul F. Knitter, “What about them?” in William C. Placher, ed. *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 309, and also S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: truth and difference in Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 225.

⁴ Lai Pan-Chiu, *Openness and Commitment: Paul Tillich's Theology and inter-religious dialogue* (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion & Culture, 2000), 27.

How then should Christians hold on to when understanding themselves in relation to people of other faiths, namely those we are concerning now, the Muslims?

4.1.2 Comparative Theology as the Leading Theological Reflection

The four typologies of theology of religions as mentioned, somehow inoculate Christians against the power and novelty of other religious traditions, for each of them concentrated on the question of the salvation of the non-Christian and had very little interest in the religions as such.⁵ When doing so, they are not really interested in what other faith is and even attempt to find a loophole (for exclusivists and inclusivists) in order to challenge and respond.

“Comparative” theology is not relative; its aim is, as James L. Fredericks claims, “an attempt to understand the meaning of Christian faith by exploring it in the light of the teachings of other religious traditions. The purpose of comparative theology is to assist Christians in coming to a deeper understanding of their own religious tradition. Doing Christiana theology comparatively means that Christians look upon the truths of non-Christian traditions as resources for understanding their own faith.”⁶

It is not so much about simply comparing the two religions, but rather about being transformed by the novelty and power of another tradition while being deeply faithful to one’s own religion, which is a call for multiple theologies in engagement but not a single theology of religions.⁷ Comparative theology is not satisfied only on theoretical discussion but focuses as well on how Christian faith can be expressed in real context.

⁵ Gavin D'Costa, *Christianity and world religions: disputed questions in the theology of religions* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 37.

⁶ James L. Fredericks, *Faith among faiths: Christian theology and non-Christian religions* (New York: Paulist, 1999), 139-40.

⁷ Gavin D'Costa, 38.

It is neither aimed at searching the common essence of religions nor the foundation of Christianity nor a theory that takes away one's religious language, ideology and framework when discussing and understanding other religions, but it is a process and practice of reflection.⁸

It is not for Christians to change their own theological stance but rather, to open up to the Islamic world.⁹ This direction of theological reflection is to be taken into practice in our mission life as well. Through comparative theology, the uniqueness and value of Christianity could then be “spread” and as long as one understands Muslims, they are willing to understand us. The problem of Christians is that we sometimes tend to monologue rather than to engage in real contact with other religious, needless to say to reflect on their own belief through others' eyes.

It has been almost 40 years since WCC proposed co-operation between the two religions, and sadly the situation is seemingly unchanged or made only little progress.¹⁰ There should not be only conflict or confrontation of encounters between Muslims and Christians but as well coexistence, for it is in fact a matter of co-operation rather than religious competition.

4.2 Knowing Muslims

As mentioned in the previous chapters, among the similarities, there are many fundamental discrepancies between the basic doctrines of Islam and Christianity. We

⁸ *Bi jiao shen xue yu dui hua li lun*, 25. See also James L. Fredericks, 9.

⁹

<http://www.iscs.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=658&Pid=10&Version=0&Cid=75&Charset=iso-8859-1>

¹⁰ Comparing the papers and proposals of WCC in the early 70s with the contemporary situations, *Christian-Muslim dialogue; papers presented at the Broumana Consultation, 12-18 July 1972*, S. J. Samartha and J. B. Taylor ed. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1973).

are, as Kenneth Cragg claims, to meet and to greet our religious counterparts, and to take three perspectives in this, for reflection on our own is significant.

4.2.1 The Prophethood of Jesus Christ

Both Christians and Muslims agree with Jesus Christ being sent by God (or Allah, the Arabic term of God) who conducts miracles and speaks with divine power as one of the great prophet.¹¹ He is the one sanctified by God and to be respected and followed. Two things which fundamentally divide Christians from Muslims and yet arouse disputes is the nature of Christ and his death (crucifixion and resurrection).

Christians emphasize the divinity of Jesus and argue against Muslims whenever it comes to the topic of this seemingly common ground and fundamental doctrine. Without doubt, for Muslims Jesus is the son of God but not God himself, even though the Christian Bible said so. For according to the Hebrew Bible, 'Son of Man' or 'Son of God' does not necessarily literally mean "son" but also "messenger" or simply stating "taking up the image of", as Moses is regarded as the Son of Man.¹² Sonship of Jesus Christ for Muslims is to be understood as the son of God because Jesus does not have any earthly father (while both religions agree on the virginity of Mary) and God love him so much that He calls him son; the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, according to their scriptures are equally seen differently.¹³

To overemphasize these two distinctive (yet fundamental) differences is time consuming and in vain, while disputation is nonetheless the only outcome perceived.

¹¹ There is controversial for both sides as well over the first miracle Jesus conducted: In the Qur'an, Jesus speaks of wise words when he's really young while the first miracle Jesus did is to turn the water to wine in the Canaanite wedding.

¹² David Larsen, "Son of God and King: Adam, Enoch, Moses," <http://www.heavenlyscents.com/2010/01/28/son-of-god-and-king-adam-enoch-moses-comments-on-old-testament-lesson-5/>

¹³ *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, vol. 1, 35.

Christians see Christ as fulfillment of three Old Testament titles, as prophet, priest, and king. However, his prophethood and priesthood has been given little attention comparing with the kingly and sonly identity, which leaves us “theologically ill-equipped” to deal with Muslims teaching on Jesus as prophet.¹⁴

It is not for Christians to avoid disputes by redirecting the doctrinal differences but rather a more comparative reflection on our own theology is to be reflected.

4.2.2 The Divine Imperative: Da’wa

Despite the discrepancies shown over the concepts of their holy scriptures and the divinity of Jesus Christ, there is something alike in the two religions: both of their followers are called to mission.

Christians are lead by the great commandment and the great commission of Jesus: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-1) and “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Muslims invite non-believers to join their faith; Da’wa (invitation to Islam) emphasizes, “There is no compulsion in religion.” (Q.2:256) and “Invite to the Path of your Lord with wisdom and good advice” (Q.16:125).¹⁵ All Muslims are, by definition,

¹⁴ Colin Chapman, “Rethinking the Gospel for Muslims,” In *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus road*, J. Dudley Woodberry ed. (California: MARC Publications, 1989), 109-10.

¹⁵ Egdunas Raciun, “The Multiple nature of the Islamic Da’wa,”

missionaries or preachers. They are but to make witness and introduce their belief to whoever they come across.

To ponder on how to be companion and witness to the Muslim brethren and sisters is then Christians' major missionary task.

4.2.3 Theo -Centric: Human Surrender

We need to keep in mind that Islam may be the religion which takes apostasy most seriously.¹⁶ Keen on conversion of one is rather inhumane for it takes up one's social, political, cultural and familial life to become a "recognized" Christian. The number of Muslim converts to Christianity who return to Islam is way higher because many converts are not able to cope with the excommunication and constant pressure from family and society.¹⁷

In Islamic faith there is no such thing as a personal or compassionate God; Heaven is where one goes if one has done more good than bad things.¹⁸ Merit has to be earned through good deeds and men are born sinless. Christianity, on the other side, is about relationship with Jesus Christ (and God), about unconditional love and grace but not salvation through good works.

The complete surrender unto God makes Muslims more devote and self-disciplined. This is something Christians could learn from their counterparts.

<http://ethesis.helsinki.fi/julkaisut/hum/aasia/vk/racius/themulti.pdf> (accessed 26th May, 2010)

¹⁶ Jan A.B. Jongeneel, "Apostasy," in *Fullness of life for all: challenges for mission in early 21st century*, Inus Daneel, Charles Van Engen and Hendrik Vroom ed. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 181.

¹⁷ Jan A.B. Jongeneel, "Apostasy," 183.

¹⁸ Colin Chapman, "Rethinking the Gospel for Muslims." In *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus road*, 121.

4.3 Rethinking the Problematic Traditional Beliefs

Besides religious differences, one is to be reminded that relations between Christians and Muslims in the past and present have almost always been deeply colored by political and social elements.¹⁹ Tension and hostility roots from the traumatic history that has cause long lasting mutual prejudice and misunderstanding.

4.3.1 Supremacy of Christianity

Throughout history, Christian mission is linked with a violation of religious freedom and hegemony of the West. Exclusive religious superiority is deeply rooted.²⁰ It is for the Christians to give, to provide and to serve the other with education, medication, material needs etc.

Every religion claims its uniqueness and authenticity, it is then only Christians to stress on their holiness and would condemn others to hell for not being saved. Many Christians nowadays still hold on to Hendrick Kraemer's believe that the Christian Gospel is unique as God's self-disclosure in a final and definitive manner, while the other religions are merely the inventions of fallen humankind.²¹ Muslims are depicted as devil and are to be awakened and to return, as if they had gone astray.

When it comes to authority of the scriptures, both of the two traditions claim their authenticity. Christians always proudly present their 600 years "older tradition" and the phenomenal ignorance of their Muslim counterparts' Qur'an.²²

¹⁹ Colin Chapman, *Islam and the west: conflict, coexistence or conversion?* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 26.

²⁰ Karel Steenbrink, "Indonesian Muslims and The North-American West," in *Fullness of life for all*, 276.

²¹ Michael Nazir-Ali, *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian encounter* (Oxford: Regnum, 1987), 18.

²² It is for sure that there is something to be done by the Muslims' side but since we are focusing on Christians' mission, I will take that part away.

Fundamentally, the roles of Bible and Qur'an are of two different dimensions and it is questionable to compare: in Islam the Qur'an is the central revelation of God whereas for Christians the Bible is rather the record or testimony of the central revelation in Jesus Christ.²³ To shake and challenge the content of Qur'an is what the challenge of the nature of Jesus Christ is to Christians.

It is essential that Christians doing mission toward Muslims put both scriptures at the centre of reflection, discussion and deliberation.²⁴ It is the way which leads as much into the exploration of differences as into the identification of common ground. To have dialogue is more than between two individual or two groups of people but rather, among the scriptures as well.

It is quite common for some Christian communities to see "Christianity as way more modernized and equal while Islam being too conservative". Take a look at the gender/sexual equality, Christians have mission to "save the Islamic women from deprivation" by taking them out of their own religious traditions.²⁵

Believing themselves to hold the key to Heaven and being the doorman of salvation, Christians see "saving souls" as their primary and ultimate concern. However, salvation should be the result of our response to God's saving initiative rather than the thing we want to attempt or target for, namely afterlife.²⁶ It should also be a process which we experienced in life instead of being an end product.

Theology as faith seeking understanding, in order to "understand" must be from below

²³ Hugh Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: from double standards to mutual understanding* (Surrey: Curzon, 1995), 44.

²⁴ *Scriptures in dialogue : Christians and Muslims studying the Bible and the Qur'ān together : a record of a seminar "Building bridges" held at Doha, Qatar, 7-9 April 2003*, Michael Ipgrave ed. (London: Church House, 2004), 144-5.

²⁵ World Editor, "Pray for Muslim Women,"

<http://www.freechristianpress.com/world/pray-for-muslim-women/>

²⁶ Michael Nazir-Ali, 60.

rather than condescending, taking into account the actual situation that affects both Christians and Muslims.²⁷ Relationship between Christians and Muslims is, if not always, “giver vs receiver” or “savior vs refugees”. It is for us to live responsibly with Muslims in mutual hospitality instead of viewing them from highlands.

4.3.2 Dialogue as Betrayal of Christ and Hindering the Authentic Biblical Mission?

For some Christians, to have dialogue or to know more about the faith details of our Muslim counterparts is betrayal of Christ and against the biblical mission to make disciples. “Why bother learning about something faked and evil?” Christians are somehow hurried to correct and “proclaim” when coming across Muslims and rather slow to listen. It may be due to their heavy sense of responsibility to save and to make disciples, and more likely, the fear of facing and dealing with the unknown.

The dialogue at theoretical level that WCC has for many years conducted obviously poses the question of “what’s next?” There is no doubt that Jesus, as Paul Knitter claims, is the unique and normative revelation of God for those who follow his way but not for those who follow the other ways.²⁸ Muslims obviously respect Jesus but not the way we do. Are Christians willing to know what stands behind this mode of thought before protesting against and denying (or even demonizing) their tradition? The devotedness and rich sense of faithfulness to God of Muslims (who is in fact also the God of Christianity) is something to be learnt and to be followed by Christians as well.²⁹

Dialogue provides a way for Christians to discover the fullness of their (both Muslims’

²⁷ Michael Nazir-Ali, 11.

²⁸ Mahmut Aydin, “Globalization and the Gospel: A Muslim View,” in *A Scandalous prophet: the way of mission after Newbigin*, Thomas F. Foust et al (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 178.

²⁹ *Islamic and Christian cultures*, 44.

and Christians') belief, so that they can offer it to others with a bolder humility and a humbler boldness.³⁰ Interreligious friendships through long lasting dialogue helps Christians to ease the fear of the alien.³¹

A one-way proclamation by only one particular community to the rest of the world is no longer feasible. The content of the gospel should be determined by taking into account the religio-cultural backgrounds of the people to whom it is proclaimed.³² Dialogue for a long run is in fact a process of exchanging information, teaching and history of one's faith or maybe even apologetic material from one side to the other.³³

A true religion which brings liberation to the poor and contributes to develop common good as Hans Kueng suggested could be attained.³⁴ Different degrees of dialogues indeed denote different degrees of willingness to communicate.

4.3.3 Conversion as Mission Accomplished?

Conversion is nothing bad, however, when it comes to Christians' request, it sometimes becomes rather coercive, rushed and shallow. A brief prayer of confession (standardized acknowledgment of conversion) right after conversation or the explanation of how Jesus Christ is related to us is considered essential to have the mission accomplished. It is not aimed at but somehow "claimed" as the victory of the Holy Spirit over the evil while the historical traumatic relationship had been recalled.

For years, conversion has been a proof and an expression of religious oppression which

³⁰ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A theology of mission for today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 380.

³¹ James L. Fredericks, 176.

³² Mahmut Aydin, 179.

³³ Michael Nazir-Ali, 87.

³⁴ Mahmut Aydin, 179.

has led to sadness, irritation, or even hatred.³⁵ It is the reason why from an ecumenical point of view, conversion is simply coercion and a narrowed down version of Gospel .

Genuine missionary encounter should bridge Gospel and community in a real sense while social responsibilities are to be taken. Without doubt, conversion sometimes is due to physical/psychological needs or even material fulfillments.³⁶ Conversion as paying lip service is counterfeit that is why mutual witnessing is something more important to be attained. The intrinsic value of Islamic traditions is essential and to be experienced firstly by Christians,³⁷ before persuading one to give up his/her belief nor to convince one to compromise on their own.

While standing in-between the Muslims, it is also important for Christians to have their own identities, to serve and minister people in their total need, both on the individual and social level. Mission is to reach out rather than to sit within, for salvation is for both body (flesh) and spirit (soul), now and future.³⁸ Conversion without background and base of long time involvement or participation is unquestionably no more than an act.

The Christian gospel is about relationships between people and God, and with others: mending and developing, as well as enhancing. The point of conversion is never the end but one of the many steps.

4.4 Mission in Context: Conversion in Another Sense

³⁵ Jan Van Butselaar, 74-5.

³⁶ As one of the informants in Chapter 3, Tariq, mentioned. According to his experiences, there are some Muslims who convert out of benefits that which being Christians could bring.

³⁷ Mahmut Aydin, 180.

³⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 399.

4.4.1 Mission towards Muslims as well as to Ourselves

Religion is culture, Raimon Panikkar even regards religion as the content and the soul of it. The acceptance of cultural divergences and convergences is highly recommended but why when it comes to religions, assimilation is but only what we look for?

Mission is in the first place *missio dei*, God's mission and purposes for all humans and for the whole person.³⁹ It has been known that verbal proclamation is one of the dimensions while praxis is a more significant one. However, instead of a single vector, to do social services or to call people to churches, there is another dimension of mission, namely the openness of mission towards ourselves and the readiness not only to evangelize, but also to be evangelized, to accept that the evangelized may become the evangelizers.⁴⁰

Both Bosch and Panikkar agree that the goal of dialogue is for Christian to become a better Christian while for Muslim to become a better Muslim, but this is not the target of mission.⁴¹ The target of mission, then should be building up relationship between the church and Muslims. Not necessary for one to join in the congregation, but the continuity of knowing and yet understanding for both parties and the readiness to bear witness and to recognize each other's stubbornness and ignorance.

Mission is not something for which Muslims are targeted, but both Christians and Muslims are called to work together as partners, to witness and work for God's reign together.⁴² They are not necessarily the clients we serve, but partners or even leaders to guide us in some issues. A mission to ourselves is one that requires intra-faith

³⁹ Michael Nazir-Ali, 59.

⁴⁰ Peter C. Phan, *In our own tongues: perspectives from Asia on mission and inculturation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), 57.

⁴¹ David J. Bosch, 487.

⁴² While Bevans mentions here in the book about Judaism and Christianity, I take out the same prospective to direct Muslims and Christians. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, 382.

dialogue, self reflection and understanding.

Islam and Christianity are highly competitive in nature while both of them focus on sharing their faiths and believe in one God. In-depth-encounter with Muslims could be frightening and a challenge to our own faith. To accept the existence of Muslims as our neighbors rather than our enemies or targets requires more than readiness but courage.

4.4.2 Conversion of Our Entire Self: the Openness to be Converted

Alongside the history, Christianity has the longest heritage of interest in conversion.⁴³ However, the meaning of conversion changed and does not involve only joining of a community for the sake of eternal salvation, but also a personal cleansing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal.⁴⁴ To accept Christ as Lord and as the centre of one's life means to accept the responsibility to serve God in this life and promote God's reign in all its forms.⁴⁵ Trying to convert people of different religious background merely implies that Christians have the assumptions of being superior by enforcing and imposing their religious belief over the Muslims counterparts.

Missiology, for Bosch, has a twofold task: in respect to theology and in respect to the missionary praxis.⁴⁶ To take one thing into consideration is not to neglect the other. "Mission is a multifaceted ministry, in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualization and much more."⁴⁷ It is then the norm and manner of every form of Christian mission, for Christian mission is a participation of the mission of God, God's

⁴³ Missiologist Dr. Seppo Syrjanen once gave this remark on Christianity. *Ministry in Islamic contexts: report of a consultation*, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (London: International Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, 1996), 25.

⁴⁴ David J. Bosch, 488.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ David J. Bosch, 496.

⁴⁷ David J. Bosch, 512.

being and action is dialogical.⁴⁸

Doing mission is at the same time being mission. Mission in honor of God is the creation of a better community, which requires a conversion of one to open up the boundary of the kingdom of God and as well open up him/herself to be converted. It does not mean that a Christian needs to be ready to be converted (or convinced by) to become a Muslim, but it means the acceptance of the change in one's mindset through reflections and challenges by those who hold views different from one's own. Social responsibilities are to be emphasized as well, not to mention about social concern. However, social concern, actions or changes are to be the by-products of proclamation.⁴⁹ οἰκουμένη, ecumenism among Christianity and Islam is then to be obtained. We should remember that to evangelize, which is to spread the Gospel wholeheartedly, other things will also come along.

⁴⁸ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, 378.

⁴⁹ Jacob Thomas, *From Lausanne to Manila: evangelical social thought: models of mission and the social relevance of the Gospel* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 36.

Conclusion

Mission as theology is not static but dynamic, it should also be contextual but not immutable and frozen, not tolerate on self-contented but requires changes. Relationships between Muslims and Christians will never be easy, while mission towards Muslims is not a one-step event but a process requiring willingness and readiness from both sides. As Bosch claims, "Mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world."¹

Most of all, before we say we starting mission towards Muslims, it is for us to first read their scripture and befriend them in order to avoid mutual ignorance or misconception by false impression. It is also for the two communities to open up for a profound spiritual transformation taking place in themselves as religious community of believers would look for.

Mission towards Muslims is something highly contextualized and to be continuously developed while a dialogical and yet participatory structure is always attained. It should help to avoid cultural dislocation or religious conflict for becoming a Christian does not necessarily mean leaving one's own cultural framework. Although LAPS might not be exactly the ideal middle way we look for, but at least she gives us a direction to work further on.

Christians should be self-reflecting agents when it comes to mission towards Muslims.

¹ David J. Bosch, 519.

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